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Matt:

A TALL OF A CARAVAN.

BY
ROBERT BUCHANAN.



NEW YORK:
D. APPLETON & CO., Publishers.

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MATT;
A TALE OF A CARAVAN.

BY
ROBERT BUCHANAN.



NEW YORK:
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY,
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1885.

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M A T T ; A TALE OF A CARAVAN.

CHAPTER I.

FIRST GLIMPSE OF THE CARAVAN.

THE afternoon was still very warm, but a gray mist, drifting from the Irish Channel, and sailing eastward over the low-lying Island of Anglesea, was beginning to scatter a thin, penetrating drizzle on the driver of the Caravan.

To right and left of the highway stretched a bleak and bare prospect of marshland and moorland, closed to the west by a sky of ever-deepening redness, and relieved here and there by black clumps of stunted woodland. Here and there peeped a solitary farmhouse, with outlying fields of swampy greenness, where lean and spectral cattle were lugubriously grazing; and ever and anon came a glimpse of some lonely lake or tarn, fringed all round with thick sedges, and dotted with water-lilies. The road was as desolate as

the prospect, with not a living soul upon it, far as the eye could see. To all this, however, the driver of the Caravan paid little attention, owing to the simple fact that he was fast asleep.

He was roused by a sudden jolting and swaying of the clumsy vehicle, combined with a sound of splashing water; and, opening his eyes sleepily, he perceived that the gray mare had turned aside from the center of the road, and, having placidly entered a stagnant pond on the road-side, was floundering and struggling in the mud thereof, with the Caravan rocking behind her. At the same moment, a head was thrust round the back part of the vehicle, and an angry voice exclaimed:

"Tim, you scoundrel, where the devil are you driving to? Wake up, or I'll break every bone in your skin."

Thus addressed, Tim woke himself with an effort, and, looking round with an insinuating smile, replied:

"Begorra, Master Charles, I thought it was an earthquake entirely— Come out of that now! Is it wanting to drown yourself you are? G-r-r-r! Sh! Aisy now, aisy!"

The latter portion of the above sentence was addressed to the mare, which was at last persuaded to wade out of the cool mud, and return to the dusty track, where she stood quivering and panting. No

sooner was the return to *terra firma* accomplished, than a light, agile figure descended the steps at the back of the Caravan, and ran round to the front. An excited colloquy, angry on the one side, and apologetic on the other, ensued, and did not cease, even when the driver, with a flick of his whip, put the Caravan again in motion, while the other strode alongside on foot.

It was just such a Caravan as may be seen any summer day forming part of the camp on an English common, with the swart face of a gypsy woman looking out at the door, and half-a-dozen ragged imps and elves rolling on the grass beneath; as may be observed, smothered in wickerwork of all descriptions, or glittering pots and pans, moving from door to door in some sleepy country town, guided by a gloomy gentleman in a velvetten coat and a hare-skin cap, and attended by a brawnie hussie, also smothered in wickerwork or pots and pans; as, furthermore, may be descried forming part of the procession of a traveling circus, and drawn by a piebald horse which, whenever a good "pitch" is found, will complete its day's labor by performances in the ring. A Caravan of the good old English kind; with small windows, ornamented by white muslin curtains, with a chimney atop for the smoke to come through from the fire inside, with a door behind,

ornamented with a knocker, and only lacking a door-plate to make it quite complete; in short, a House on Wheels.

The driver, though rough enough, and red with sun and wind, had nothing in common with the ordinary drivers of such vehicles, and, in point of fact, he was neither a gypsy, nor a traveling tinker, nor a circus-performer. Though it was summer time, he wore a large frieze coat, descending almost to his heels, and on his head a wideawake hat—underneath which his lazy, beardless, and somewhat sheepish face shone with indolent good humor. His companion, Master Charles, as he was called, bore still less resemblance to the Bohemians of English lanes and woodlands. He was a slight, handsome, fair-haired young fellow, of two or three and twenty, in the tweed attire of an ordinary summer tourist; and every movement he made, every word he spoke, implied the “gentleman born.”

Presently, at a signal from his master (such he was), Tim drew rein again. By this time the sun was setting fiery red, far away to the west, and the thin drizzle was becoming more persistent.

“How far did they say it was to Pencroes?”

“Ten miles, sor.”

“The mare is tired out, I think. We shall have to camp by the roadside.”

"All right, Master Charles. There's a handy shelter beyant there where you see the trees," Tim added, pointing up the road with his whip. The young man looked in that direction, and saw, about a quarter of a mile away, that the highway entered a dark clump of woodland. He nodded assent, and walked rapidly forward, while the Caravan followed slowly in his rear.

Reaching the point where the wood began, and entering the shadow of the trees, he soon found a spot well fitted for his purpose. To the left, the road widened out into a grassy patch of common, adorned with one or two bushes of stunted brown, and stretched out a dusty arm to touch a large white gate, which opened on a gloomy, grass-grown avenue winding right through the heart of the wood. The Caravan, coming slowly up, was soon placed in a snug position, not far from the gate, the horse was taken out and suffered to graze, while Tim, searching about, found some dry sticks, and began to light a fire. Diving into the Caravan, the young man re-emerged with a camp-stool, on which he sat down, lighted a meerschaum pipe, and began to smoke. They could hear the rain faintly pattering in the boughs above them, but the spot they had chosen was quite sheltered and dry.

The fire soon blazed up. Entering the Caravan

in his turn, Tim brought out a tin kettle full of water, and placed it on the fire, preparatory to making tea. He was thus engaged when the sound of a horse's hoofs was heard along the highway, and presently the figure of a horseman appeared, approaching at a rapid trot. As it came near to the group on the wayside, the horse shied violently, springing from one side of the road to the other, so that its rider, a dark, middle-aged man, in an old-fashioned cloak, was almost thrown from the saddle. Uttering a fierce oath, he recovered himself, and, reining in the frightened animal, looked angrily round; then, seeing the cause of the mischance, he forced his horse, with no small difficulty, to approach the figures by the fire.

"Who are you?" he demanded, in harsh, peremptory tones. "What are you doing here?"

The young man, pipe in mouth, looked up at him with a smile, but made no reply.

"What are you? Vagrants? Do you know this place is private?"

And he pointed with his riding-whip to a printed "Notice!" fixed close to the gate upon the stem of a large fir-tree.

"I beg your pardon," said the young man, with the utmost *sang froid*; "we are, I imagine, on the Queen's highway, and there, with your permission, we purpose to remain for the night."

Struck by the superior manner of the speaker, the new-comer looked at him in some surprise, but with no abatement of his haughty manner. He then glanced at Tim, who was busy with the kettle, from Tim to the gray mare, and from the gray mare to the house on wheels. The scowl on his dark face deepened, and he turned his fierce eyes again on the young man.

"Let me warn you that these grounds are private. I suffer no wandering vagabonds to pass that gate."

"May I ask your name?" said the young man, in the same cool tone, and with the same quiet smile.

"What is my name to you?"

"Well, not much, only I should like to know the title of so very amiable a person."

The other condescended to no reply, but walked his horse toward the gate.

"Here, fellow!" he cried, addressing Tim. "Open this gate for me!"

"Don't stir!" said his master. "Let our amiable friend open the gate for himself."

With an angry exclamation the rider leaped from his saddle, and, still holding the horse's reins, threw the gate wide open. Then, still leading his horse, he strode over toward the young man, who, looking

up, saw that he was nearly six feet high, and very powerfully built.

"My name is Monk, of Monkshurst," he said. "I've a good mind to teach you to remember it."

"Don't be afraid," was the reply. "Monk, of Monkshurst? I shall be certain not to forget it, Mr. Monk, of Monkshurst! Tim, is the water boiling?"

For a moment Mr. Monk, as he called himself, seemed ready to draw his riding-whip across the young man's face, but, conquering himself, he surveyed him from head to foot with savage anger. Nothing daunted, the young man returned his stare with something very like supreme contempt. At last, muttering beneath his breath, Mr. Monk turned away, and, leading his horse into the avenue, closed the gate, and remounted; but even then he did not immediately depart, but remained for some minutes, seated in the saddle, scowling over at the encampment.

Thus occupied, his face and figure set in the gloomy framework of the trees, he looked even more forbidding than before. His face, though naturally handsome, was dark with tempestuous passions, his eyes deep-set and fierce, his clean-shaven jaw square and determined. For the rest, his black hair, which was thickly mixed with iron-gray, fell almost

to his shoulders, and his upper lip was covered with an iron-gray mustache.

At last, as if satisfied with his scrutiny, Mr. Monk turned his horse round with a fierce jerk of the rein, and rode rapidly away in the shadow of the wood.

CHAPTER II.

LEAVES FROM A YOUNG GENTLEMAN'S JOURNAL.

"BEFORE setting forth on this memorable pilgrimage to nowhere, I promised a certain friend of mine, in literary Bohemia, to keep notes of my adventures, with a view to future publication, illustrated by my own brilliant sketches. I fear the promise was a rash one—firstly, because I am constitutionally lazy and averse to literary exertion, and, secondly, because I have, as yet, met with no adventures worth writing about. Not that I have altogether lost my first enthusiasm for the idea. There would be novelty in the title, at any rate, 'Cruises in a Caravan,' by Charles Brinkley, with illustrations by the author; photographic frontispiece, the Caravan, with Tim as large as life, smirking self-consciously in

delight at having his pictur' taken. My friend B— has promised to find me a publisher, if I will only persevere. Well, we shall see. If the book does not progress, it will be entirely my own fault; for I have any amount of time on my hands. Paint as hard as I may all day, I have always the long evenings, when I must either write, read, or do nothing.

“So I am beginning this evening, exactly a fortnight after my first start from Chester. I purchased the Caravan there from a morose individual, with one eye, who had had it built with a view to the exhibition of a Wild Man of Patagonia; but said Wild Man having taken it into his head to return to County Cork, where he was born, and the morose individual having no definite idea of a novelty to take his place, the Caravan came into the market. Having secured this traveling palace, duly furnished with window-blinds, a piece of carpet, a chair-bedstead, a table, a stove, cooking-utensils, not to speak of my own artistic paraphernalia, I sent over to Mulrany, County Mayo, for my old servant, Tim-na-Chalnig, or Tim o' the Ferry—otherwise Tim Linney; and with his assistance, when he arrived, I purchased a strong mare at Chester Fair. All these preliminaries being settled, we started one fine morning soon after daybreak, duly bound for explorations along the macadamized highways and byways of North Wales.

"I am pleased to say that Tim, after he had recovered the first shock of seeing a peripatetic dwelling-house, took to the idea wonderfully. 'Sure it's just like the ould cabin at home,' he averred, 'barrin' the wheels, and the windies, and the chimley, and the baste to pull it along'; and I think the resemblance would have been complete in his eyes, if there had only been two or three pigs to trot merrily behind the back door. As for myself, I took to the nomad life as naturally as if I had never in my life been in a civilized habitation. To be able to go where one pleased, to dawdle as one pleases, to stop and sleep where one pleased, was certainly a new sensation. My friends, observing my sluggish ways, had often compared me to that interesting creature, the snail; now the resemblance was complete, for I was a snail, indeed, with my house comfortably fixed upon my shoulders, crawling tranquilly along.

"Of course, the Caravan has its inconveniences. Inside, to quote the elegant simile of our progenitors, there is scarcely room enough to swing a cat in; and when my bed is made, and Tim's hammock is swung just inside the door, the place forms the tiniest of sleeping-chambers. Then our cooking arrangements are primitive, and, as Tim has no idea whatever in the culinary art, beyond being able to

boil potatoes in their skins, and make very doubtful 'stirabout,' there is a certain want of variety in our repasts. To break the monotony of this living, I endeavor, whenever we come to a town with a decent hotel in it, to take a square meal away from home.

"Besides the inconveniences which I have mentioned, but which were, perhaps, hardly worth chronicling, the Caravan has social drawbacks, more particularly embarrassing to a modest man like myself. It is confusing, for example, on entering a town, or good-sized village, to be surrounded by the entire juvenile population, who cheer us vociferously, under the impression that we constitute a 'show,' and, afterward, on ascertaining their mistake, pursue us with opprobrious jeers; and it is distressing to remark that our mode of life, instead of inviting confidence, causes us to be regarded with suspicion by the Vicar of the parish and the local policemen. We are exposed, moreover, to ebullitions of bucolic humor, which have taken the form of horse-play on more than one occasion. Tim has had several fights with the Welsh peasantry, and has generally come off victorious; though, on one occasion, he would have been overpowered by numbers if I had not gone to his assistance. Generally speaking, nothing will remove from the rural population an idea that

the Caravan forms an exhibition of some sort. When I airily alight, and stroll through a village, sketch-book in hand, I have invariably at my heels a long attendant train of all ages, obviously under the impression that I am looking for a suitable 'pitch,' and am going to 'perform.'

"To avoid these and similar inconveniences, we generally halt for the night in some secluded spot—some roadside nook or outlying common. But there is a fatal attraction in the Caravan: it seems to draw spectators, as it were, out of the very bowels of the earth. No matter how desolate the place we have chosen, we have scarcely made ourselves comfortable when an audience gathers, and stragglers drop in, amazed and open-mouthed. I found it irksome at first to paint in the open air, with a gazing crowd at my back making audible comments on my work as it progressed; but I soon got used to it, and, having discovered certain good 'subjects' here and there among my visitors, I take the publicity now as a matter of course. Even when busy inside, I am never astonished to see strange noses flattened against the windows—strange faces peeping in at the door. The human temperament accustoms itself to anything. When all is said and done, it is flattering to be an object of such public interest; and I do believe that, when I return to civilization, and find

no one caring in the least what I do, I shall miss the worldly tribute which is now my daily due.

"I begin this record in the Island of Anglesea, where we have arrived after our fortnight's wanderings in the more mountainous districts of the mainland. Anglesea, I am informed, is chiefly famous for its pigs and its wild ducks. So far as I have yet explored it, I find it flat and desolate enough; but I have been educated in Irish landscapes, and don't object to flatness when combined with desolation. I like these dreary meadows, these bleak stretches of melancholy moorland, these wild lakes and lagoons.

"At the present moment I am encamped in a spot where, in all probability, I shall remain for days. I came upon it quite by accident, about mid-day yesterday, when, on my way to the market town of Pencroes; or, rather, when I imagined that I was going thither, while I had, in reality, after hesitating at three cross-roads, taken the road which led in exactly the opposite direction. The way was desolate and dreary beyond measure—stretches of morass and moorland on every side, occasionally rising into heathery knolls or hillocks, or strewed with huge pieces of stone like the moors of Cornwall. Presently the open moorland ended, and we entered a region of sandy hillocks, sparsely ornamented here

and there with long, harsh grass. If one could imagine the waves of the ocean, at some moment of wild agitation, suddenly frozen to stillness, and returning intact these tempestuous forms, it would give some idea of the hillocks I am describing. They rose on every side of the road, completely shutting out the view, and their pale, livid yellowness, scarcely relieved with a glimpse of greenness, was wearisome and lonely in the extreme. As we advanced among them, the road we were pursuing grew worse and worse, till it became so choked and covered with drifted sand as to be scarcely recognizable, and I need hardly say that it was hard work for one horse to pull the Caravan along; more than once, indeed, the wheels fairly stuck, and Tim and I had to pull with might and main to get them free.

"We had proceeded in this manner for some miles, and I was beginning to realize the fact that we were out of our reckoning, when, suddenly emerging from between two sand-hills, I saw a wide stretch of green meadow land, and beyond it a glorified piece of water. The sun was shining brightly, the water sparkled like a mirror, calm as glass, and without a breath. As we appeared, a large heron rose from the spot on the waterside where he had been standing—

‘Still as a stone, without a sound,
Above his dim blue shade’—

and sailed leisurely away. Around the lake, which was about a mile in circumference, the road ran winding, till it reached the farther side, where more sand-hills began; but between these sand-hills I caught a sparkling glimpse of more water, and (guided to my conclusion by the red sail of a fishing-smack just glimmering on the horizon line) I knew that farther water was—the sea.

“The spot had all the attraction of complete desolation, combined with the charm which always, to my mind, pertains to lakes and lagoons. Eager as a boy or a loosened retriever, I ran across the meadow, and found the grass long and green, and sown with innumerable crowfoot flowers; underneath the green was sand again, but here it glimmered like gold-dust. As I reached the sedges on the lake side, a teal rose, in full summer plumage, wheeled swiftly round the lake, then, returning, splashed down boldly, and swam within a stone’s throw of the shore; when, peering through the rushes, I caught a glimpse of his mate, paddling anxiously along with eight little fluffs of down behind her. Then, just outside the sedges, I saw the golden shield of water broken by the circles of rising trout. It was too much. I hastened back to

the Caravan, and informed Tim that I had no intention of going any farther—that day, at least.

“So here we have been since yesterday, and, up to this, have not set eyes upon a single soul. Such peace and quietness is a foretaste of Paradise. As this is the most satisfactory day I have yet spent in my pilgrimage, although it bears, at the same time, a family likeness to the other days of the past fortnight, I purpose setting down, *verbatim*, *seriatim*, and chronologically, the manner in which I occupied myself from dawn to sunset.

“6 A. M.—Wake, and see that Tim has already disappeared, and folded up his hammock. Observe the morning sun looking in with a fresh, cheery countenance at the window. Turn over again with a yawn, and go to sleep for another five minutes.

“7.15 A. M.—Wake again, and discover, by looking at my watch, that, instead of five minutes, I have slept an hour and a quarter. Spring up at once, and slip on shirt and trousers; then pass out, barefooted, into the open air. No sign of Tim, but a fire is lighted close to the Caravan, which shadows it from the rays of the morning sun. Stroll down to the lake, and, throwing off what garments I wear, prepare for a bath. Can not get out for a swim on account of the reeds. The bath over, return and finish my toilet in the Caravan.

"8 A. M.—Tim has reappeared. He has been right down to the seashore, a walk of about two miles and a half. He informs me, to my disgust, that there is some sort of a human settlement there, and a life-boat station. He has brought back in his baglet, as specimens of the local products, a dozen new-laid eggs, some milk, and a loaf of bread. The last, I observe, is in a fossil state. I ask who sold it him. He answers, William Jones.

"8.30 A. M.—We breakfast splendidly. Even the fossil loaf yields sustenance, after it is cut up and dissolved in hot tea. Between whiles, Tim informs me that the settlement down yonder is, in his opinion, a poor sort of a place. There are several white-washed cottages, and a large, roofless house, for all the world like a church. Devil the cow or pig did he see at all, barrin' a few hens. Any boats, I ask. Yes, one, with the bottom knocked out, belonging to William Jones.

"Tim has got this name so pat, that my curiosity begins to be aroused. 'Who the deuce is William Jones?' 'Sure, thin,' says Tim, 'he's the man that lives down beyant, by the sea.' I demand, somewhat irritably, if the place contains only one inhabitant? Devil another did Tim see, he explains—barrin' William Jones.

"9.30 A. M.—Start painting in the open air, under

the shade of a large white cotton umbrella. Paint on till 1 P. M.

"1 P. M.—Take a long walk among the sand-hills, avoiding the settlement beyond the lake. Don't want to meet any of the aboriginals, more particularly William Jones. Walking here is like running up and down Atlantic billows, assuming said billows to be solid; now I am lost in the trough of the sand, now I re-emerge on the crest of the solid wave. Amusing, but fatiguing. I soon lose myself, every hillock being exactly like another. Suddenly a hare starts from under my feet, and goes leisurely away. I remember an old amusement of mine in the west of Ireland, and I track Puss by her footprints—now clearly and beautifully printed in the soft sand of the hollows, now more faintly marked on the harder sides of the ridges. The sun blazes down, the refraction of the heat from the sand is overpowering, the air is quivering, sparkling, and pulsating, as if full of innumerable sand crystals. A horrible croak from overhead startles me, and, looking up, I see an enormous raven, wheeling along in circles and searching the ground for mice or other prey.

"Looking at my watch, I find that I have been toiling in this sandy wilderness for quite two hours. Time to get back and dine. Climb the nearest hillock, and look round to discover where I am. Can

see nothing but the sandy billows on every side, and am entirely at a loss which way to go. At last, after half an hour's blind wandering, stumble, by accident, on the road by the lake-side, and see the Caravan in the distance.

"4 P. M.—Dinner. Boiled potatoes, boiled eggs, fried bacon. Tim's cooking is primitive, but I could devour anything—even William Jones's fossil bread. I asked if any human being has visited the camp. 'Sorra one,' Tim says, looking rather disappointed. He has got to feel himself a public character, and misses the homage of the vulgar.

"Paint again till 6 P. M.

"A beautiful sunset." The sand-hills grow rosy in the light, the lake deepens from crimson to purple, the moon comes out like a silver sickle over the sandy sea. A thought seizes me as the shadows increase. Now is the time to entice the pink trout from their depths in the lake. I get out my fishing-rod and line, and, stretching two or three flies which seem suitable, prepare for action. My rod is only a small, single-handed one, and it is difficult to cast beyond the sedges, but the fish are rising thickly out in the tranquil pools, and, determined not to be beaten, I wade in to the knees. Half-a-dozen trout, each about the size of a small herring, reward my enterprise. When I have captured them,

the moon is high up above the sand-hills, and it is quite dark.

"Such is the chronicle of the past day. By the light of my lamp inside the Caravan I have written it down. It has been all very tranquil and uneventful, but very delightful, and a day to be marked with a white stone, in one respect—that from dawn to sunset I have not set eyes on a human being, except my servant.

"Stop, though! I am wrong. Just as I was returning from my piscatorial excursion to the lake, I saw, passing along the road in the direction of the sea, a certain solitary horseman, who accosted me not too civilly on the road-side the night before last. He scowled at me in passing, and, of course, recognized me by the aid of the Caravan. His name is Monk, of Monkshurst, and he seems to be pretty well monarch of all he surveys. I have an impression that Mr. Monk, of Monkshurst, and myself are destined to be better, or worse, acquainted."

CHAPTER III.

MATT MAKES HER FIRST APPEARANCE.

"EUREKA! I have had an adventure at last; and yet, after all, what am I talking about? It is no adventure at all, but only a common-place incident. This is how it happened:

"I was seated this morning before my easel, out in the open air, painting busily, when I thought I heard a movement behind me.

"I should have premised, by the way, that Tim had gone off on another excursion into the Jones territory, on the quest for more eggs and milk.

"I glanced over my shoulder, and saw, peering round the corner of my white sunshade, a pair of large, eager eyes—fixed, not upon me, but upon the canvas I was painting.

"Not in the least surprised, I thought to myself, 'At last! The Caravan has exercised its spell upon the district, and the usual audience is beginning to gather.' So I went tranquilly on with my work, and paid no more attention.

"Presently, however, fatigued with my work, I indulged in a great yawn, and rose to stretch myself. I then perceived that my audience was more select than numerous, consisting of only one individ-

nal—a young person in a Welsh chimney-pot hat. Closer observation showed me that said hat was set on a head of closely cropped, curly black hair, beneath which there shone a brown, boyish face freckled with sun and wind, a pair of bright black eyes, and a laughing mouth with two rows of the whitest of teeth. But the face, though boyish, did not belong to a boy. The young person was dressed in an old cotton gown, had a colored woolen shawl or scarf thrown over the shoulders, and wore thick woolen stockings and rough shoes, the latter many sizes too large. The gown was too short for the wearer, who had evidently outgrown it; it reached only just below the knee, and, when the young person moved, one caught a glimpse of something very much resembling a dilapidated garter.

“The young person’s smile was so bright and good-humored that I found myself answering it with a friendly nod.

“‘How are you?’ I said, gallantly. ‘I hope you’re quite well?’

“She nodded in reply, and, stooping down, plucked a long blade of grass, which she placed in her mouth and began to nibble—bashfully, I thought.

“‘May I ask where you come from?’ I said. ‘I mean, where do you live?’

“Without speaking, she stretched out her arm

and pointed across the lake in the direction of the sea. I could not help noticing then, as an artist, that the sleeve of her gown was loose and torn, and that her arm was round and well-formed, and her hand, though rough and sun-burned, quite genteelly small.

“‘If it is not inquisitive, may I ask your name?’

“‘Matt,’ was the reply.

“‘Is that all? What is your other name?’

“‘I’ve got no other name. I’m Matt, I am.’

“‘Indeed! Do your parents live here?’

“‘Got no parents,’ was the reply.

“‘Your relations, then. You belong to some one, I suppose?’

“‘She gave me another nod.

“‘Yes,’ she answered, nibbling rapidly. ‘I belong to William Jones.’

“‘Oh, to *him*,’ I said, feeling as familiar with the name as if I had known it all my life. ‘But he’s not your father?’

“‘She shook her head emphatically.

“‘But of course he’s a relation?’

“‘Another shake of the head.

“‘But you belong to him?’ I said, considerably puzzled. ‘Where were you born?’

“‘I wasn’t born at all,’ answered Matt. ‘I come ashore.’

"This was what the immortal Dick Swiveller would have called a 'staggerer.' I looked at the girl again, inspecting her curiously from top to toe. Without taking her eyes from mine, she stood on one leg bashfully, and fidgeted with the other foot. She was certainly not bad-looking, though evidently a very rough diamond. Even the extraordinary head-gear became her well.

"'I know what you was doing there,' she cried suddenly, pointing to my easel. 'You was painting!'

"The discovery not being a brilliant one, I took no trouble to confirm it; but Matt thereupon walked over to the canvas, and, stooping down, examined it with undisguised curiosity. Presently she glanced again at me.

"'I know what *this* is,' she cried, pointing. 'It's water. And that's the sky. And that's trees. And these here'—for a moment she seemed in doubt, but added, hastily—'pigs.'

"Now, as the subject represented a flock of sheep huddling together close to a pond on a rainy common, this suggestion was not over-complimentary to my artistic skill. I was on the point of correcting my astute critic, when she added, after a moment's further inspection:

"'No; they're sheep. Look ye now, I know! They're sheep.'

“‘Pray, don’t touch the paint,’ I suggested, approaching her in some alarm. ‘It is wet, and comes off.’

“She drew back cautiously; and then, as a preliminary to further conversation, sat down on the grass, giving me further occasion to remark her length and shapeliness of limb. There was a free-and-easiness, not to say boldness, about her manner, tempered though it was with gusts of bashfulness which began to amuse me.

“‘Can you paint faces?’ she asked, dubiously.

“I replied that I could even aspire to that accomplishment, by which I understood her to mean portrait-painting, if need were. She gave a quiet nod of satisfaction.

“‘There was a painter chap came to Aberglyn last summer, and he painted William Jones.’

“‘Indeed?’ I said, with an assumption of friendly interest.

“‘Yes; I wanted him to paint *me*, but he wouldn’t. He painted William Jones’s father, though, along o’ William Jones.’

“This with an air of unmistakable disgust and recrimination. I looked at the girl more observantly. It had never occurred to me till that moment that she would make a capital picture—just the sort of ‘study’ which would fetch a fair price in the market.

I adopted her free-and-easy manner, which was contagious, and sat down on the grass opposite to her.

"‘I tell you what it is, Matt,’ I said, familiarly, ‘I’ll paint you, though the other painter chap wouldn’t.’

"‘You will?’ she cried, blushing with delight.

"‘Certainly; and a very nice portrait I think you’ll make. Be good enough to take off your hat, that I may have a better look at you.’

"She obeyed me at once, and threw the clumsy thing down on the grass beside her. Then I saw that her head was covered with short black curls, clinging round a bold white brow unfreckled by the sun. She glanced at me sidelong, laughing, and showing her white teeth. Whatever her age was, she was quite old enough to be a coquette.

"Promptly as possible I put the question: ‘You have not told me how old you are.’

"‘Fifteen,’ she replied, without hesitation.

"‘I should have taken you to be at least a year older.’

"She shook her head.

"‘It’s fifteen year come Whitsuntide,’ she explained, ‘since I come ashore.’

"Although I was not a little curious to know what this ‘coming ashore’ meant, I felt that all my conversation had been categorical to monotony, and

I determined, therefore, to reserve further inquiry until another occasion. Observing that my new friend was now looking at the Caravan with considerable interest, I asked her if she knew what it was, and if she had ever seen anything like it before. She replied in the negative, though I think she had a tolerably good guess as to the Caravan's uses. I thought this a good opportunity to show my natural politeness. Would she like to look at the interior? She said she would, though without exhibiting much enthusiasm.

"I thereupon led the way up the steps and into the vehicle. Matt followed; but, so soon as she caught a glimpse of the interior, stood timidly on the threshold. What is there in the atmosphere of a house, even the rudest, which places the visitor at a disadvantage as compared with the owner? Even animals feel this, and dogs especially, when visiting strange premises, exhibit most abject humility. But I must not generalize. The bearings of this remark, to quote my friend Captain Cuttle, lies in the application of it. Matt for a moment was awed.

"'Come in, Matt; come in,' I said.

"She came in by slow degrees; and I noticed, for the first time—seeing how near her hat was to the roof—that she was unusually tall. I then did the honors of the place; showed her my sleeping

arrangements, my culinary implements, everything that I thought would interest her. I offered her the arm-chair, or turned-up bedstead; but she preferred a stool which I sometimes used for my feet, and, sitting down upon it, looked round her with obvious admiration.

“‘Should you like to live in a house like this?’ I asked, encouragingly.

“She shook her head with decision.

“‘Why not?’ I demanded.

“She did not exactly know why, or, at any rate, could not explain. Wishing to interest and amuse her, I handed her a portfolio of my sketches, chiefly in pencil and pen-and-ink, but a few in water-colors. Her manner changed at once, and she turned them over with little cries of delight. It was clear that Matt had a taste for the beautiful in Art, but her chief attraction was for pictures representing the human face or figure.

“Among the sketches she found a crayon-drawing of an antique and blear-eyed gentleman in a skull cap, copied from some Rembrandtish picture I had seen abroad.

“‘I know who this is!’ she exclaimed. ‘It’s William Jones’s father!’

“I assured her on my honor that William Jones’s father was not personally known to me,

but she seemed a little incredulous. Presently she rose to go.

“‘I can’t stop no longer,’ she explained; ‘I’ve got to go up to Monkshurst for William Jones.’

“‘Monkshurst? Is that where the polite Mr. Monk resides?’

“‘Yes; up in the wood,’ she replied, with a grimace expressive of no little dislike.

“‘Is Mr. Monk a friend of yours?’

“Her answer was a very decided negative. Then, slouching to the door, she swung herself down to the ground. I followed, and stood on the threshold, looking down at her.

“‘Don’t forget that I’m to paint your picture,’ I said. ‘When will you come back?’

“‘To-morrow, may be.’

“‘I shall expect you. Good-by!’

“‘Good-by, master,’ she returned, reaching up to shake hands.

“I watched her as she walked away toward the road, and noticed that she took bold strides like a boy. On reaching the road, she looked back and laughed, then she drew herself together, and began running like a young deer, with little or nothing of her former clumsiness, until she disappeared among the sand-hills.

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"*Thursday.*—This morning, just after breakfast, when I had entered the Caravan to prepare my materials for the day's painting, Tim appeared at the door with a horrid grin.

"'There's a young lady asking for ye,' he said.

"I had forgotten for the moment my appointment of the day before, and, when I leaped from the Caravan, I perceived, standing close by, with her back to me, and her face toward the lake, the figure of a young woman. At first I failed to identify her, for she wore a black hat and a white feather, a cloth jacket, and a dress which almost reached the ground; but she turned round as I approached her, and I recognized my new acquaintance.

"I can not say that she was improved by her change of costume. In the first place, it made her look several years older—in fact, quite young-womanly. In the second place, it was tawdry, not to say, servant-gally, if I may coin such an adjective. The dress was of thin silk, old and frayed, and looking as if it had suffered a good deal from exposure to the elements, as was indeed the actual case. The jacket was also old, and seemed made of the rough material which is usually cut into sailors' pea-jackets; which was the case also. The hat was obviously new, but, just as obviously, home-made.

“‘So you have come,’ I said, shaking hands.
‘Upon my word, I didn’t know you.’

“She laughed delightedly, and glanced down at her attire, which clearly afforded her the greatest satisfaction.

“‘I put on my Sunday clothes,’ she explained, ‘‘cause I was going to have my likeness took. Don’t you tell William Jones.’

“I promised not to betray her to that insufferable nuisance, and refrained from informing her that I thought her ordinary costume far more becoming than her seventh-day finery.

“‘That’s a nice dress,’ I said, hypocritically.
‘Where did you buy it?’

“‘I didn’t buy it. It come ashore.’

“‘What! When you “come ashore” yourself?’

“‘No fear!’ she answered. ‘Last winter when the big ship went to bits out there.’

“‘Oh, I see! Then it was a portion of a wreck?’

“‘Yes, it come ashore; and, look ye now, this jacket come ashore too. On a sailor chap.’

“‘And the sailor chap made you a present of it, I suppose?’

“‘No fear!’ she repeated, with her sharp shake of the head. ‘How could he give it me, when he was drowned and come ashore? William Jones

gave it to me, and I altered it my own self—look ye now—to make it fit.’

“She was certainly an extraordinary young person, and wore her mysterious finery with a coolness I thought remarkable, it being quite clear, from her explanation, that all was fish that came to her net, or, in other words, that dead men’s clothes were as acceptable to her unprejudiced taste as any others. However, the time was hastening on, and I had my promise to keep. So I got my crayon materials, and made Matt sit down before me on a stool, first insisting, however, that she should divest herself of her head-gear, which was an abomination, but which she discarded with extreme reluctance. Directly I began, she became rigid, and fixed herself, so to speak, as people do when being photographed—her eyes glaring on vacancy, her whole face lost in self-satisfied vacuity.

“‘You needn’t keep like that,’ I cried; ‘I want your face to have some expression. Move your head about as much as you like, laugh and talk—it will be all the better.’

“‘Last time I was took,’ she replied, ‘the chap said I mustn’t move.’

“‘Ah! I suppose he was a traveling photographer?’

“‘He had a little black box, like, on legs, and a

cloth on top of it, and he looked at me through a hole in the middle. Then he cried "now," and held up his hand for me to keep still as a mouse; then he counted fifty—and I was took.'

"Ah! Indeed! Was it a good likeness?'

"Yes, master. But I looked like the black woman who come ashore last Easter was a year.'

"With conversation like this we beguiled the way, while I proceeded rapidly with my drawing. At the end of a couple of hours Matt had become so fidgety that I thought it advisable to give her a rest. She sprang up, and ran over to inspect the picture. The moment her eyes fell upon it, she uttered a rapturous cry.

"Look ye now, ain't it pretty? Master, am I like *that*?''

"I answered her it was an excellent likeness, and not too flattering. Her face fell, however, a little as she proceeded.

"Are my cheeks as red as that, master?'

"You are red, Matt,' I replied, flippantly; 'so are the roses.'

"She looked at me thoughtfully.

"When it's finished, will you give it to me to keep?'

"Well, we shall see.'

"I gave t'other chap a shilling for his, frame

and all, but I've got no more money,' she continued, with an insinuating smile, which, as a man of gallantry, I could not resist. So I promised that, if she behaved herself properly, I would, in all probability, make her the present she coveted.

"'You must come again to-morrow,' I said, as we shook hands, 'and I'll finish the thing off.'

"'All right, master, I'll come.'

"And, with a nod and a bright smile, she walked away.

"During the whole of this interview Tim had not been unobservant, and so soon as I was left alone he looked up from the work he was engaged upon, viz., potato-washing, and gave a knowing smile.

"'Sure she's a fine bold colleen,' he said. 'Does your honor know who she is?'

"'I have not the slightest idea.'

"'They're saying down beyant that she's a say-fondling, and has neither father nor mother, nor any belongings.'

"'Pray who was your informant?'

"'The man who picked her from the say—William Jones hisself.'

"That name again. It was becoming too much for flesh and blood to bear. From the first moment of my arrival I had heard no other, and I had begun to detest its very sound."

CHAPTER IV.

INTRODUCES WILLIAM JONES AND HIS FATHER.

My story is now bound to follow in the footsteps of Matt, who, on quitting the presence of her artist-friend, walked rapidly along the sand-incumbered road in the direction of the sea.

Skirting the lake upon the left hand, and still having the ocean of sand-hills upon her right, she gradually slackened her pace. A spectator, had he been by, would have doubtless observed that the change was owing to maiden meditation; that, in other words, Matt had fallen into a brown study.

Presently she sat down upon a convenient stone, or piece of rock, and, resting her elbows on her knees, her chin in her hands, looked for some minutes at vacancy. At last she rose, flushing warmly, and murmuring something to herself.

The something was to this effect:

"His hands are as white as a lady's, when he pulls off them gloves, and he said I was as pretty as my picture."

I can only guess at the train of reasoning which led to this soliloquy, and express my opinion that Matt had well-developed ideas on the subject of the sexes. True, she was not above sixteen, and had

little or no experience of men, none at all of men who were both young and good-looking. Nevertheless, she was not insensible of the charms of a white hand, and other tokens of masculine refinement and beauty.

By a natural sequence of ideas, she was led to stretch out her own right hand and look at it critically. It was very brown, and covered with huge golden freckles. The inspection not being altogether satisfactory, she thrust both her hands irritably into the pockets of her jacket, and walked on.

Leaving the lake behind her, she followed the road along a swampy hollow, down which the very shallowest of rivulets crept along to the sea, now losing itself altogether in mossy patches of suspicious greenness, again emerging and trickling with feeble glimmers over pebble and sand. Presently she left the road and came upon a primitive wooden bridge, consisting of only one plank, supported on two cairns of stone. Here she paused, and, seeing a red-legged sand-piper running about on the edge of the water just below her, made a gesture like a boy's throwing a stone, whereon the sand-piper sprang up chirping, and flew along out of sight.

By this time she was in full sight of the sea. Dead calm, and covered with rain-colored shadows, it touched the edges of the flat sands about a mile

away, and left one long creamy line of changeless foam. The sands themselves stretched away to the westward far as eye could see. But to the left and eastward, that is to say, in the direction toward which she was going, there was a long, rocky promontory, with signs of human habitation. Breaking into a swing-like trot, Matt hastened thither, following a footpath across marshy fields.

In due time she came out upon a narrow and rudely made road which wound along the rocky promontory, at low-water skirting the sand, at high-water, the sea. The first house she reached was a wooden life-boat house, lying down in a creek; and it being then low tide, at some distance from the water's edge. On the roadside above the house was a flagstaff, and beneath the flagstaff a wooden seat. All was very still and desolate, without a sign of life; but a little farther along the road was a row of cottages which seemed inhabited, and were, in fact, the abodes of the coast-guard. Instead of lingering here, Matt proceeded on her way until she reached what, at first sight, looked like the beginning of a village, or small town. There were houses on each side of the road, some of them several stories high; but close inspection showed that most of them were roofless, that few of them possessed any windows or doors, and that nearly all were decayed

and dilapidated from long disuse, while not a few had a blasted and sinister appearance, as if blackened by fire. And still there was no sign of any human soul. Suddenly, however, the street came to an end, and Matt found herself on a sort of rocky platform overlooking the sea; and on this platform, shading his eyes from the blazing sun, and looking out seaward, was a solitary man.

So intent was he on his occupation, that he was unconscious of Matt's approach till she was standing by his side. He turned his eyes upon her for a moment, and then once more gazed out to sea.

A short, plump, thickset man, with a round, weather-beaten face, which would have been good-humored but for its expression of extreme watchfulness and greed. The eyes were blue, but very small and keen; the forehead low and narrow; the hair coarse and sandy; the beard coarser and sandier still. He might have been about fifty years of age. His dress was curious: consisting of a yellow sou'-wester, a pair of seaman's coarse canvas trousers, and a blue pilot-jacket, ornamented with brass buttons which bore the insignia of Her Majesty's naval service.

Presently, without turning his eyes again from the far distance, the man spoke in a husky, far-away whisper:

"Matt, do you see summat out yonder?"

Matt strained her gaze through the dazzling sunlight, but failed to discern any object on the light expanse of water.

"Look ye now," continued the man; "it may be drifting weed, or it may be wreck; but it's summat. Look again."

"Summat black, William Jones?"

"Yes. Coming and going. Now it comes, and it's black; now it goes, and the water looks white where it was. If it isn't wreck, it's weed; if it ain't weed, it's wreck. And the tide's flowing, and it'll go ashore afore night at the Caldron Point, if I wait for it. But I shan't wait," he added, eagerly. "I'll go and overhaul it now."

He looked round suspicious, and then said:

"Matt, did you seen any of them coast-guard chaps as you come along?"

"No, William Jones."

"Thought not. They're up Pencroes way, fooling about; so there's a chance for a honest man to look arter his living without no questioning. You come along with me, and if it *is* summat, I'll gie thee tuppence some o' these fine days."

As he turned to go, his eye fell for the first time on her attire.

"What's this, Matt? What are you doing in your Sunday clothes?"

The girl was at a loss how to reply. She blushed scarlet, and hung down her head. Fortunately for her, the man was too absorbed in his main object of thought to catechise her further. He only shook his fat head in severe disapprobation, and led the way down to a small creek in the rocks, where a rough coble was rocking, secured by a rusty chain.

"Jump in and take the paddles. I'll sit astern and keep watch."

The girl obeyed and leaped in; but before sitting down she tucked up her dress to her knees to avoid the dirty water in the bottom of the boat. William Jones followed, and pushed off with his hands. Calm as the water was, there was a heavy shoreward swell, on which they were immediately uplifted with some danger of being swept back on the rocks; but Matt handled the paddles like one to the manner born, and the boat shot out swiftly on the shining sea.

The sun was burning with almost insufferable brightness, and the light blazed on the golden mirror of the water with blinding refracted rays. Crouching in the stern of the boat, William Jones shaded his eyes with both hands, and gazed intently on the object he had discovered far out to sea. Now and then he made a rapid motion to guide the girl in her rowing, but he did not speak a word.

Oh, how hot it was out there on the wideless waves! For some time Matt pulled on in silence; but at last she could bear it no longer, and rested on her oars, with the warm perspiration streaming down her freckled cheeks.

"Pull away, Matt," said the man, not looking at her. "You ain't tired, not you!"

With a long-drawn breath Matt drew in the oars, and, swift as thought, peeled off her jacket and threw off her hat, leaving her head exposed to the burning sun.

Now, the silk gown she wore had evidently been used by its original owner as a festal raiment, for it had been cut low, and had short sleeves. So Matt's shoulders and arms were perfectly bare, and very white they looked in contrast with her sun-freckled hands, her sun-burned face, and her warm brown neck. Her bust was as yet undeveloped, but her neck and shoulders were fine, and her arms beautifully molded. Altogether, her friend the painter, could he have seen her just then, would have regarded her with increasing admiration.

Freed from the incumbrance of her jacket, she now pulled away with easy grace and skill. Farther and farther the boat receded from shore, till the promontory they had left was a couple of miles away. Suddenly William Jones made a sign to the

girl to stop, and stood up in the boat to reconnoitre.

The object at which he had been gazing so long was now clearly visible. It consisted of something black, floating on a glassy stretch of water, and surrounded by fragments of loose scum or foam; it was to all appearance motionless, but was, in reality, drifting wearily shoreward on the flowing tide.

William Jones now evinced increasing excitement, and urged his companion to hurry quickly forward—which she did, putting out all her strength in a series of rapid and powerful strokes. Another quarter of an hour brought them to the spot where the object was floating. Trembling with eagerness, the man leaned over the boat's side with outstretched hands.

As he did so, Matt turned her head away with a curious gesture of dread.

"What is it, William Jones?" she asked, not looking at him.—"It isn't—you know—one o' *them*?"

"No, it ain't!" replied the man, leaning over the side of the coble, and tilting the gunwale almost to the water's edge. "Too early for *them*, Matt. If they comes, it won't be till Sunday's tide. They're down at the bottom now, and ain't yet rose. Easy! Lean 'tother way! So there—look out!"

As he spoke, he struggled with something in the water, and at last, with an effort which almost cap-sized the boat, pulled it in. Matt looked now, and saw that it was a small, flat, wooden trunk, covered with pieces of slimy weed. Floating near it were several pieces of splintered wood which seemed to have formed part of a boat. These, too, William secured, and threw down on the foot-board beneath him.

"It's a box, that's what it is," cried Matt.

"It's a box, surely," said Jones. "And it's locked, too. And, look ye now. I misdoubt there's nowt inside, or mayhap it would have sunk. Howsomever, we'll see!"

After an unavailing effort to force it open with his hands, he drew forth a large clasp-knife, worked away at the lock, and tried to force open the lid, which soon yielded to his efforts, as the action of the salt-water had already begun to rot the wood. On being thus opened, the box was found to contain only a couple of coarse linen shirts, an old newspaper, two or three biscuits, and half a bottle of some dark fluid.

After examining these articles one by one, William Jones threw them back into the box with gestures of disgust, retaining only the bottle, which he uncorked and applied to his lips.

"Rum!" he said, smacking his lips and nodding at Matt. Then, recorking the bottle carefully, he returned it to the box, and, standing up, reconnoitred the sea on every side. But nothing else rewarded his eager search; he threw himself down in the stern of the boat, and ordered Matt to pull back to shore.

As they went, he closed one eye thoughtfully, and mused aloud:

"Night afore last it blew half a gale from the southard. This here box came awash from the east coast of Ireland. May be it was a big ship as was lost; them planks was part of a wessel's long-boat. More's coming if the wind don't come up from the norrard. The moon's full to-night and to-morrow. I'll tell the old 'un, and keep a sharp lookout off the Caldron P'int."

Matt rowed on steadily till they came within a quarter of a mile of the shore, when William Jones stood up again and reconnoitred the prospect inland.

"Pull in, Matt!" he said, after a minute. "All's square!"

Soon afterward the boat reached the rocks. William Jones sprang out, and, running up to the platform above, took another survey. This being satisfactory, he ran down again and lifted the box

out of the boat, carrying it with ease under one arm.

"Make the boat fast," he said, in a husky whisper; "and bring them bits o' wood along with you for the fire. I'll cut on to the cottage with this here. It ain't much, but it's summat; so I'll carry it clean out o' sight before them precious coast-guards come smelling about."

With these words he clambered up the rocks with his burden, leaving Matt to follow leisurely in his wake.

CHAPTER V.

CONCLUDES WITH A KISS.

Nor far from the spot where William Jones had landed, and removed some little distance from the deserted village, with its desolate main street and roofless habitations, there stood a low, one-storied cottage, quite as black and forbidding-looking as any of the abandoned dwellings in its vicinity. It was built of stone, and roofed with slate, but the doorway was composed of old ship's timber, and the one small window it contained had originally formed the window of a ship's cabin. Over the door was

placed, like a sign, the wooden figure-head of a young woman, naked to the waist, holding a mirror in her hand, and regarding herself with remarkable complacency, despite the fact that accident had deprived her of a nose and one eye, and that the beautiful red complexion and jet black hair she had once possessed had been entirely washed away by the action of the elements, leaving her all over of a leprous pallor. The rest of the building, as I have suggested, was of sinister blackness, though here and there it was sprinkled with wet sea-sand. Sand, too, lay on every side, covered a small patch, originally meant for a garden, and drifted thickly up to the very door.

To this cottage William Jones ran with his treasure-trove, and, entering in without ceremony, found himself in almost total darkness; for the light which crept through the blackened panes of the small windows was only just sufficient to make darkness visible. But this worthy seaside character, having, in addition to a cat's predatory instincts, something of a cat's power of vision, clearly discerned everything in the chamber he just entered—a rude, stone-paved kitchen, with an open fireplace, and no grate, black rafters overhead, from which suspended sundry lean pieces of bacon, a couple of wooden chairs, a table, and, in one corner, a sort of bed in

the wall, where a human figure was reposing. Setting down the trunk on the floor, he marched right over to the bed, and unceremoniously shook the individual lying upon it, whom he discovered to be a man, muttering in a heavy sleep. Finding that he did not wake with shaking, William Jones bent down and cried lustily in his ear:

“Wreck! wreck ashore!”

The effect was instantaneous. The figure rose up in bed, disclosing the head and shoulders of a very old man, who wore a red cotton night-cap, and whose hair and beard were as white as snow.

“Eh? Wheer? Wheer?” he cried, in a shrill treble, looking vacantly around him.

“Wake up, old ’un!” said William, seizing him, and shaking him again. “It’s me, William Jones.”

“William? Is it my son William?” returned the old man, peering out into the darkness.

“Yes, father. Look ye now, you was a-talking again in your sleep, you was. A good thing no one heerd you but your son William. Some o’ these days you’ll be letting summat out, you will, if you go on like this.”

The old man shook his head feebly, then, clasping his hands together in a kind of rapture, he looked at his son, and said:

“Yes, William, I was a-dreaming. Oh, it was

such a heavingly dream! I was a-standing on the shore, William, and it was a-blowing hard from the east, and all at once I see a ship as big as an Indian, come in wi' all sail set, and go ashore; and I looked round, William dear, and there was no one nigh but you and me; and, when she broke up, I see gold and silver and jewels come washing ashore just like floating weeds, and the drowned, every one of 'em, had rings on their fingers, and gold watches and cheens, and, more'n that, that their hands was full of shining gold; and one on 'em—a lady, William—had a bright diamond ring, as big as a walnut; but when I tried to pull it off, it wouldn't come: and just as I pulled out my leetle knife to cut the finger off, and put it in my pocket, you shook me, William, and woke me up. Oh, it was a heavingly dream!"

William Jones had listened with ill-disguised interest to the early part of this speech, but, on its conclusion, he gave another grunt of undissembled disgust.

"Well, you're awake now, old 'un; so jump up. I've brought summat home. Look sharp, and get a light."

Thereupon the old man, who was fully dressed, in a pair of old woolen trousers and a guernsey, slipped from the bed, and began fumbling about the

room. He soon found what he wanted—a box of matches and a rude, home-made candle, fashioned of a long, coarse reed dipped in sheep's tallow; but, owing to the fact that he was exceedingly feeble and tremulous, he was so long in lighting up, that his gentle son grew impatient.

"Here, give 'un to me!" said William. "You're wasting them matches just as if they cost nowt. A precious father *you* are, and no mistake."

The candle being lighted and burning with a feeble flame, he informed the old man of what he had found. In a moment the latter was down on his knees, opening the box, and greedily examining its contents. But William pushed him impatiently away and closed the lid with a bang.

"Theer, enough o' that, old 'un! You hold the light while I carry the box in and put it away."

"All right, William dear—all right," returned the old man, obeying gleefully. "I know'd we should have luck, by that beautiful dream."

The two men—one holding the light and the other carrying the trunk—passed through a door at the back of the kitchen and entered an inner chamber. This chamber, too, contained a window, which was so blocked up, however, by lumber of all kinds that little or no daylight entered. Piled up in great confusion were old sacks, some partly full, some

empty, coils of rope, broken oars, broken fragments of ships' planks, rotten and barnacled, a small boat's rudder, dirty sails, several oilskin coats, bits of iron ballast, and other flotsam and jetsam: so that the chamber had a salt and fish-like smell, suggesting the hold of some vessel. But in one corner of the room was a small wooden bed, with a mattress and coarse bed-clothing, and hanging on a nail close to it was certain feminine attire which the owner of the Caravan would have recognized as the garb worn by Matt on the morning of her first appearance.

Placing the box down, William Jones carefully covered it with a portion of an old sail.

"It's summat, but it ain't much," he muttered, discontentedly. "Lucky them coast-guards didn't see me come ashore. If they did, though, it wouldn't signify; for what's floating on the sea belongs to him as finds it."

A sound startled him as he spoke, and, looking round suspiciously, he saw Matt entering the room, loaded with broken wood. But she was not alone; standing behind her in the shadow was a man—none other, indeed, than Monk, of Monkshurst.

While Matt entered the room to throw down her load of wood, Monk stood in the doorway. His quick eye had noted the movements of father and son.

"More plunder, William Jones?" he asked, grimly.

In a moment William Jones was transformed. The keen expression of his face changed to one of mingled stupidity and sadness; he began to whine.

"More plunder, Mr. Monk?" he said. "No, no; the days for finding that is gone. Matt and me has been on the shore foraging for a bit o' firewood—that be all. Put it down, Matt; put it down."

Matt did as she was told: opening her arms, she threw her load into a corner of the room; then William Jones hurried the whole party back into the kitchen.

The men seated themselves on benches; but Matt moved about the room to get a light. The light, as well as everything else, was a living illustration of the meanness of William Jones. It consisted, not of a candle, but of a long rush, which had been gathered from the marshes by Matt, and afterward dried and dipped in grease by William Jones. Matt lighted it and fixed it in a little iron niche which was evidently made for the purpose, and which was attached to a table near the hearth. When the work was finished, she threw off her hat and jacket, retired to the farther end of the hearth, and sat down on the floor.

During the whole of this time Mr. Monk had been watching her gloomily; and he had been

watched in his turn by William Jones. At last the latter spoke:

"Matt's growed," said he; "she's growed wonderful. Lord bless us! she's a bit changed she is sin' that night when you found her down on the shore. Why, her own friends wouldn't know her!"

Mr. Monk started and frowned.

"Her friends?" he said—"what friends?"

"Why, them as owns her," continued William Jones. "If they wasn't all drowned in the ship what she came ashore from, they must be somewhere. Mayhap some day they'll find her, and reward me for bringin' her up a good gal—that's what I allus tell her."

"So that's what you always tell her, do you?" returned Monk, grimly. "Then you're a fool for your pains. The girl's got no friends—haven't I told you that before?"

"Certainly you have, Mr. Monk," returned William Jones, meekly; "but look ye now, I think—"

"You've no right to think," thundered Monk; "you're not paid for thinking: you're paid for keeping the girl, and what more do you want?—Matt," he continued, in a softer tone, "come to me."

But Matt didn't hear—or, at any rate, did not heed; for she made no movement. Then Monk,

gazing intently at her, gave vent to the same remark as William Jones had done a few hours before:

"Where have you been to-day," he said, "to have on that frock?"

Again Matt hung her head and was silent. Monk repeated his question; and, seeing that he was determined to have an answer, she threw up her head defiantly, and said, with a tone of pride in her voice:

"I put it on to be took!"

"To be took?" repeated Monk.

"Yes," returned Matt; "to have my likeness took. There be a painter chap here that lives in a cart; he's took it."

It was curious to note the changes in Mr. Monk's face. At first he tried to appear amiable; then his face gradually darkened into a look of angry suspicion. Matt never once withdrew her eyes from him—his very presence seemed to rouse all that was bad in her; and she glared at him through her tangled locks in much the same manner as a shaggy terrier puppy might gaze at a bull which it would fain attack, but feared on account of its superior strength.

"Matt," said Mr. Monk again, "come here."

This time she obeyed; she rose slowly from her seat and went reluctantly to his side.

"Matt, look me in the face," he said. "Do you know who this painter is?"

Matt shook her head.

"How many times have you seen him?"

"Twice."

"And what has he said to you?"

"A lot o' things."

"Tell me one thing."

"He asked me who my mother was, and I told him I hadn't got none."

Mr. Monk's face once more grew black as night.

"So," he said, "poking and prying and asking questions. I thought as much. He's a scoundrelly vagabond!"

"No, he ain't," said Matt, bluntly.

"Matt, my girl," said Mr. Monk, taking no notice of her interruption, "I want you to promise me something."

"What is it?"

"Not to go near that painter again!"

Matt shook her head.

"Shan't promise," she said, "'cause I shall go. My likeness ain't took yet—he takes a time, he does. I'm going to put them things on to-morrow and be took again."

For a moment the light in his eyes looked dan-

gerous, then he smiled and patted her cheek—at which caress she shrank away.

“What’s the matter?” he asked.

“Nothing,” said Matt. “I don’t like to be pulled about, that’s all.”

“You mean you don’t like *me*?”

“Don’t know. That’s telling.”

“And yet you’ve no cause to hate me, Matt, for I’ve been a good friend to you—and always shall, because I like you, Matt. Do you understand, I like you?”

So anxious did he seem to impress this upon her, that he put his arm around her waist, drew her toward him, and kissed her on the cheek, a ceremony he had never performed before. But Matt seemed by no means to appreciate the honor; as his lips touched her cheeks she shivered, and when he released her she began rubbing at the place as if to wipe the touch away.

If Mr. Monk noticed this action on the part of the girl, he deemed it prudent to take no notice of it. He said a few more pleasant things to Matt, and again patted her cheek affectionately, then he left the cottage, taking William Jones with him. Ten minutes later William Jones returned alone.

“Where’s *he*?” asked Matt.

"Meanin' Mr. Monk, Matt—he be gone!" said William Jones.

"Gone for good?" demanded Matt, impatiently.

"No, he ain't, Matt; he'll be down here to-morrow, he will: and you'd best be at home!"

Matt said nothing this time; she only turned away sullenly and shrugged her shoulders.

"Matt," said William Jones, presently.

"Well?"

"Mr. Monk seems uncommon fond of you, he do."

Matt reflected for a moment, then she replied:

"I wonder what he's fond o' me for, William Jones?"

"Well, I dunno; 'cause he is, I suppose," returned William Jones, having no more logical answer at his command.

"Tain't that," said Matt; "he don't love me 'cause I'm *me*, William Jones. There's summat else, and I should just like to know what that summat is, I should."

William Jones looked at her, conscious that there was a new development of sagacity in her character, but utterly at a loss to understand what that new development meant.

CHAPTER VI.

ALSO CONCLUDES WITH A KISS.

WHEN Matt awoke, the next morning, the first thing she did was to look around for her Sunday clothes, which on retiring to rest she had carefully placed beside her bed. They were gone, and in their place lay the habiliments she was accustomed to wear on her erratic pilgrimages every day.

Her face grew cloudy; she hunted all round the chamber, but, finding nothing that she sought, she was compelled to array herself as she best could.

"William Jones," she said, when she sat with that worthy at a hermit's breakfast of dry bread and whey, "where's my Sunday clothes?"

William Jones fidgeted a bit, then he said:

"They're put where you won't find 'em. Look ye now, Matt, you'd best be after doin' summat useful than runnin' about after a painter chap. I was down on the shore this morning, and I seen heaps o' wood—you'd best get some of it afore night!"

Matt gave a snort, but said nothing. A few minutes later her benign protector left the cottage, and a little after he had disappeared Matt issued forth; but instead of beating the shore for firewood,

as she had been told to do, she ran across the fields to the painter.

She found him already established at his work. The fact was he had been for some time strolling about with his hands in his pockets, and scanning the prospect on every side for a sight of her. Having got tired of this characteristic occupation, he at length sat down and began to put a few touches to the portrait. Seeing that he was unconscious of her approach, Matt crept up quietly behind him and took a peep at the picture.

Her black eyes dilated with pleasure.

"Oh, ain't it beautiful!" she exclaimed.

"So you have come at last," said Brinkley quietly, going on with his painting.

She made no movement and no further sound; so he continued:

"Perhaps, now you *have* come, you'll be good enough to step round that I may continue my work. I am longing to refresh my memory with a sight of your face, Matt!"

"Well, you can't," said Matt; "they're locked up!"

"Eh—what's locked up—my memory or your face?"

It was clear Matt could not appreciate banter. She saw him smile, and guessed that he was laugh-

ing at her, and her face grew black and mutinous. She would have slunk off, but his voice stopped her.

"Come here, Matt," he said. "Don't be silly, child; tell me what's the matter, and—why, what has become of your resplendent raiment—your gorgeous Sunday clothes?"

"Didn't I tell you?—they're locked up."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, William Jones done it 'cause *he* told him. *He* don't want me to come here and be took."

"Oh! Tell you what it is, Matt, we will have our own way, in spite of them. For the present this picture shall be put aside. If in a day or so you can again don your Sunday raiment, and sit to me again in them—if not, I dare say I shall be able to finish the dress from memory. That portrait I shall give to you. In the mean time, as I want one for myself, I will paint you as you are. Do you approve?"

Matt nodded her head vigorously.

"Very well," said Brinkley. "Then we will get on."

He removed from his easel and carefully covered the portrait upon which he had been working. Then he put up a fresh cardboard, and sat down, inviting Matt to do the same.

With the disappearance of the Sunday clothes the

girl's stiffness seemed to have disappeared also, and she became again a veritable child of Nature. She looked like a shaggy young pony fresh from a race on the mountain-side, as she threw herself on the ground in an attitude which was all picturesqueness and beauty. Then, with her plump, sun-burned hand, she began to carelessly pull up the grass, while her black eyes searched alternately the prospect and the painter's face.

Presently she spoke:

"*He* says you're a pryin' scoundrel," she said.

Brinkley looked up and smiled.

"Who is *he*, Matt?"

"Mr. Monk," she replied, and gave a jerk with her head in the direction of Monkshurst.

"Oh, indeed," said Brinkley. "It is my amiable equestrian friend, is it? I'm sure I'm much obliged to him. And when, may I ask, did he bore you with his opinion of me?"

"Last night, when he come to see William Jones. He said I wasn't to be took no more, 'cause you was a scoundrel poking and prying."

Brinkley began to whistle, and went on for a while vigorously touching up his work. Then he looked up and regarded the girl curiously.

"Mr. Monk seems to be very much interested in *you*, Matt?"

The girl nodded her head vigorously; then, remembering the odious caress to which Mr. Monk had subjected her, she began to violently rub her cheek again.

"Why is Mr. Monk so interested in you? Do you know?"

"E'raps it's 'cause he found me when I come ashore."

"Oh, *he* found you, did he? Then why doesn't he keep you?"

"He do, only I live along o' William Jones."

Again Brinkley began whistling lightly, and working away vigorously with his brush. Presently the conversation began again.

"Matt, what things did you come ashore in?"

"I dunno!"

"You have never heard whether anything was found with you which might lead to your finding your relations?"

"No; no more has William Jones. He says may be they'll find me some day and reward him, but Mr. Monk says they were all drowned, and I ain't got no friends 'cept him and William Jones."

"Well, since he found you, I suppose he ought to know; and since you *have* no relations, Matt, and no claim upon anybody in the world, it was very

kind of Mr. Monk to keep you, instead of sending you to the work-house as he might have done."

On this point Matt seemed rather skeptical.

"Well," continued Brinkley, as he went on lightly touching up his work, "perhaps I have done my equestrian friend a wrong. Perhaps his unamiable exterior belies his real nature; perhaps he is good and kind, generous to the poor, willing to help the helpless—like you, for instance."

"Is it him?" exclaimed Matt; "Monk, of Monks-hurst! Why he don't give nothin' to nobody. No fear."

"And yet, according to your own showing, he has helped to support you all these years—you, who have no claim whatever upon him."

This was an enigma to which Matt had no solution. She said no more, but Brinkley, while he continued his painting, silently ruminated thus:

"It strikes me this puzzle would be worth unraveling if I could only find the key. Query, is the young person the key, if I but knew how to use her? Perhaps, since the amiable Monk evidently dislikes my coming into communication with her. But it would be useless to lay the case before her, since, if she is the key, she is quite unconscious of it herself."

He threw down his brush, rose and stretched himself, and said:

"Look here, Matt, I'm tired of work. The sun shining on those sand-hills and on the far-off sea is too tempting. I shall go for a walk, and you, if you are in the mood, shall be my guide."

She evidently was in the mood, for she was on her feet in an instant.

"All right, master," she said, "I'll go."

"Very well. Tim, bring forth some refreshment. We will refresh the inner man and girl before we start."

Tim disappeared into the Caravan. Presently he reappeared bearing a small tray, on which was a small flask of brandy, a large jug of milk, some biscuits, and a couple of glasses. This he placed on the camp-stool, which his master had just vacated, and which, when not in use as a seat, served as a table. Brinkley poured out two glasses of milk, then, looking at Matt, he held the little flask on high.

"Brandy, Matt?"

She shook her head.

"Very well, child; I think you are wise. Here, take the milk and drink confusion to your enemies!"

Matt took the glass of milk and drank it down,

while Brinkley hastened to dilute and dispose of the other. Then he gave some orders to Tim, and they started off. As they had no particular object in view, they chose the pleasantest route, and clearly the pleasantest lay across the sand-hills. Not because the sand-hills were pleasant in themselves—they were not, especially on a day when the sun was scorching the roads and making the sea like a mill-pond—but because by crossing the sand-hills one came on the other side upon a foot-path which led, by various windings, gradually to the top of breezy cliffs.

To the sand-hills, therefore, they wended their way. Having gained them, they followed a route which Matt knew full well, and which soon brought them to the narrow foot-path beyond. During the walk she was singularly silent, and Brinkley seemed to be busily trying to work out some abstruse problem which had taken possession of his brain.

When they had followed the foot-path for some distance and had gained the greensward on the top of the cliffs, the young man threw himself upon the grass, and invited Matt to do the same. It was very pleasant there, soothing both to the eye and to the mind. The cliff was covered—somewhat sparsely, it is true—with stunted grass; and just below, on their right, lay the ocean, calm as any mill-pond, but sighing softly as the water kissed the rocks and flowed

back again with rhythmic throbs. On their left lay the sand-hills, glittering like dusty gold in the sun-rays, while just before and below them was the village.

"Do you see that house standing all by itself, close to shore?" said Matt, pointing to the cottage where she lived. "That belongs to William Jones. And, look ye now, there be William Jones on the rocks!"

Looking down, Brinkley beheld a figure moving along the rocks, just where the water touched the edge.

"Very lazy of William Jones," he said. "Why isn't he at work?"

"At work?"

"Yes, tilling the fields or fishing. By the way, I forgot to ask you, is he a fisherman?"

"No, he ain't," said Matt. "He's a wrecker, he is!"

"A what?" exclaimed Brinkley.

"A wrecker," continued Matt, as if wrecking was the most natural occupation in the world. Brinkley looked at her, imagining that she must be practicing some wild joke. He had certainly heard of wreckers, but he had always believed that they were a species of humanity which had belonged to past centuries, and were now as extinct as a mammoth. But the

girl evidently meant what she said, and thought there was nothing extraordinary in the statement.

"That sea don't look ugly do it?" she continued, pointing at the ocean. "But it is: there's rocks out there, where the ships split on; then they go all to pieces, and the things come ashore."

"And what becomes of all the things, Matt?"

"Some of 'em's stole, and some of 'em's took by the coast-guards. They do say," she added, mysteriously, "as there's lots o' things—gold and silver—hid among them sand-hills. Before the coast-guards come all the folk was wreckers, like William Jones, and they used to get what come ashore, and they used to hide it in the sand-hills."

"Indeed! Then, if that is the case, why don't they take the treasure up, and turn it into money?"

"Why? 'Cause them sand-hills is allus changing and shifting about, they are; though they know well enough the things is there, there's no findin' of 'em!"

"I always thought William Jones was poor?"

"So he is, he says!" replied Matt; "'cause, though he be allus foraging, he don't find much now on account 'o them coast-guard chaps."

After they had rested themselves, they went a little farther up the cliff, then they followed a narrow winding path which brought them to the shore below. Here Matt, who seemed to be pretty well grounded

in the history of the place, pointed him out the wonders of the coast. She showed him the caves, which tradition said had been formerly used as wreckers' haunts and treasure-stores, but which were now washed by the sea, and covered with slimy weeds; then she brought him to a promontory where they told her she herself had been found. This spot Brinkley examined curiously, then he looked at the girl.

"I suppose you had clothes on when you came ashore, didn't you, Matt?"

"Why, of course I had. William Jones has got 'em!"

"Has he? Where?"

"In his cave, I expect."

"His cave! Where is that?" asked Brinkley, becoming very much interested.

"Dunno," returned Matt; "perhaps it's somewhere here about. I've seen William Jones come about here, I have, but I never could track him!"

Matt's information on the subject was so vague that it seemed useless to institute a search; so, after a regretful look at the rocks, Brinkley proposed that they should saunter back along the shore.

"By the way," said he, "I want you to introduce me to William Jones."

"To William Jones?"

"Yes. Strange as the fancy may seem to you, I should like for once in my life to stand face to face with a real live wrecker."

They made their way back along the coast, until they reached William Jones's cottage. Here they paused, principally for Brinkley to take a glance at the quaint dwelling, then they crossed the threshold. What sort of a place he had got into it was utterly impossible for Brinkley to tell, it was so dark he could see nothing. Having crossed the threshold, therefore, he paused, but Matt went fearlessly forward, struck a light, and ignited the rush-light on the table.

"William Jones," said she, "here be the painter!"

By the light of the flickering rush-light Brinkley now looked about him. At a glance he noted some of the details of the queer little room; then his eye fell upon the occupants whom, from Matt's description, he recognized as William Jones, and the grizzly author of his being.

The old man, who, Brinkley perforce admitted, certainly bore some resemblance to the Rembrandtish head which Matt had recognized, sat dozing fitfully by the hearth, while his son was busily employed in mending an old lantern.

Upon the entrance of Brinkley, the lantern was quickly thrown aside, and William Jones, assuming

a most obsequious manner, hastened to give a welcome to the stranger. Brinkley was amused. He accepted William Jones's offer of a seat, then he lit up his briar-root pipe, and, while smoking lazily, he put a few questions to his host. But if he expected to gain information of any kind he was soon undeceived. William Jones was no fool. Combined with excessive avarice, he possessed all the cunning of the fox, and the moment he saw that the stranger was pumping him, he was on his guard.

Presently, however, his curiosity gained the day. Categorically, in his turn, he began to question Brinkley about his doings.

"I suppose now, master," said he, "you travel about a deal in that cart o' your'n?"

Brinkley explained that the "cart" in question had been in his possession only a few months.

"But I traveled a good deal before I got it," he explained. "This time last year I was in Ireland."

"In Ireland, master?"

"Yes, on the west coast; do you know it?"

William Jones shook his head.

"There be plenty wreck there, ain't there?" said he, suddenly.

"Wreck?" repeated Brinkley.

"Yes, I've heard tell o' wonderful storms and big ships breaking up. Look ye now, they do tell

wonderful tales; and I wonder sometimes if all they says be true."

Brinkley looked at his host for a minute or so in silent wonder, for the little man was transformed. Instead of gazing about him with the stupid expression which up till now his face had worn, his face expressed all the keenness of a fox-hound well on the scent. There was also another curious thing which the young man noticed: that the word "wreck" seemed to act like magic on the other member of the Jones's household. At the first mention of it the old man started from his sleep; and he now sat staring wildly before him, evidently imagining he was standing on a headland, gazing out to sea.

"Wreck!" he murmured. "Ay, there it be, driftin' in wi' the wind and the tide, William,—driftin' in wi' the tide."

"Shut up, old man," said William, giving his father a nudge; then turning again to Brinkley, he said, "Be them tales true, master?"

"Eh?—Oh, yes; perfectly true," said Brinkley, being in a lively humor, and determined to give his host a treat.

The expression in the eyes of William Jones became even more greedy.

"P'raps," he said, "you've seen some of them wrecks?"

"Dear me, yes," answered Brinkley, determined to give the reins to his imagination. "I've seen any number of them. Huge ships broken up like match-boxes, and every soul on board them drowned; then afterward—"

"Ah yes, mister," said William Jones eagerly as the other paused; "arter—"

"Well, afterward, my friend, I've seen treasures come ashore that would have made you and me, and a dozen others such, rich for life."

"Dear, dear! and what become of it, mister—tell me that?"

"What became of it?" repeated Brinkley, whose imagination was beginning to give way; "why, it was appropriated, of course, by the population."

"And didn't you take your share, mister?"

"I?" repeated Brinkley, who was getting muddled; "well, no;—firstly, because I didn't wish to—I have a superstitious horror of wearing dead men's things; and secondly, because I could not have done so had I wished. The people are clannish; they wanted it all for themselves, and would have killed any interfering stranger."

"I suppose, mister, there be no coast guard chaps *there*?" said William Jones.

"Oh dear, no! No coast-guards."

"Ah!" sighed the old man, coming out of his

trance. "It warn't so long ago when there warn't no coast-guard chaps *here* neither. Then times was better for honest men. On a dark night, 'twas easy to put a light on the headland, and sometimes we got a prize or two that way, didn't we, William dear? but now—"

"You shut up!" roared William, giving his parent a very forcible dig in the ribs. "You don't know what you're talkin' about, you don't. The old 'un is a bit queer in the head, master," he explained; "and he's allus a dreamin', he is. There ain't no prizes here, the Lord knows; it's a'most as much as we can do to git a bit o' bread. Matt knows that; don't ee', Matt?"

But whatever Matt knew she evidently meant to keep to herself, for she gave no reply. Presently, after a little more general conversation, Brinkley rose to go. He offered a two-shilling piece to William Jones; and, somewhat to his amazement, that worthy accepted it gratefully.

"Good-by, Matt," said Brinkley. But in a trice Matt was beside him.

"I'm going to show you the way," she explained as she went out with him into the air.

"Whew!" said Brinkley when they were fairly clear of the cabin; "the open air is better than that den; but then William Jones is very poor, isn't he, Matt?"

"He *says* he is."

"But don't you believe it?"

"P'raps I do, and p'raps I don't; it don't matter to you, does it?"

"Not the least in the world."

They went on for a while in silence; then Matt, who had been furtively watching his face all the while, spoke again:

"You ain't angry, are you, master?" she asked.

"I angry?—what for?"

"'Cause I said that just now."

"Dear me, no; whatever *you* might say, Matt, wouldn't offend me."

If he expected to please her by this he was mistaken.

"That's 'cause you don't care. Well, I don't care neither, if *you* don't."

She ran a little ahead of him, and continued to precede him until she gained the last sand-hill, and caught a glimpse of the Caravan. Then she paused.

"You don't want me to go no further, do you?"

"No."

"All right—good-by."

She gave a bound, like a young deer, and prepared to start for a swift run back, but the young man called her.

"Matt, come here!"

She came up to him. He put his arm about her shoulders, bent over her upturned face, and kissed her. In her impulsive way, Matt returned the kiss ardently; then, to her amazement, she gave one strange look into his eyes—blushed violently, and hung her head.

"Come, give me another, Matt," he said.

But Matt would not comply. With one jerk she freed herself from him; then, swift as lightning she ran back across the hills toward the sea.

CHAPTER VII.

MATT GROWS MATRIMONIAL.

THAT night the young man of the Caravan had curious dreams, and throughout them all moved, like a presiding fairy, Matt of Aberglyn. Sometimes he was wandering on stormy shores, watching the wrecks of mighty argosies; again, he was in mysterious caverns underneath the ground, searching for and finding buried treasure; still again, he was standing on the decks of storm-tossed vessels, while the breakers thundered close at hand, and the bale-fires burned

on lonely headlands. But at all times, and in all places, Matt was his companion.

And, curiously enough, Matt in his dream was very different to the Matt of waking reality: taller and brighter—in fact, as beautiful as a vision can be; so that his spirit was full of a strange sensation of love and pity, and the touch of the warm little hand disturbed his spirit with mysterious joy. So vivid did this foolish dream become at last, that he found himself seated on a sunny rock by the sea, by Matt's side; and he was talking to her like a lover, with his arm around her waist; and she turned to him, with her great eyes fixed on his, and kissed him over and over again, so passionately—that he awoke!

It was blowing hard, and the rain was pelting furiously on the roof of the Caravan. He tried to go to sleep again, but the face of Matt (as he had seen it in his dream) kept him for a long time awake.

“Now, young man,” he said to himself, “this is idiotic. In the first place, Matt is a child, not a young woman; in the second place, she is a vulgar little thing, not a young lady; in the third place, you ought to be ashamed of yourself for thinking of sentiment at all in such a connection. Is your brain softening, youngster? or are you laboring un-

der the malign influence of William Jones? The kiss you gave to this unsophisticated daughter of the desert was paternal, or say, amicable; it was a very nice kiss, but it has no right to make you dream of stuff and nonsense."

But the influence of the dream was over him, and in that half-sleeping, half-waking state, he felt like a boy in love. He found himself calculating the age of his own friend. Let him see! it was fifteen years since, in her own figurative expression, she "come ashore," and the question remained, How old was she on that interesting occasion? As far as he could make out from her appearance, she could not be more than sixteen. For a damsel of that age, her kiss was decidedly precocious.

At last he tumbled off again, and dreamed that Matt was a young lady of beautiful attire and captivating manners, to whom he was "engaged"; and her speech, strange to say, was quite poetical and refined; and they walked together, hand in hand, to a country church on a green hillside, and were just going to enter, when who should appear upon the threshold but Mr. Monk, of Monkshurst? But they passed him by, and stood before the altar, where the parson stood in his white robes, and when the parson asked aloud whether any one saw any just reason or impediment that the pair should be joined in holy

matrimony, the same Monk stepped forward, with a Mephistophelian smile, and cried, "Yes, I do!" On which the young man awoke again in agitation, to find that it was broad daylight and a fine fresh summer morning.

Whom should he find waiting for him when he had dressed himself and stepped from the house on wheels but Matt herself? Yes, there she was, as wild and quaintly-attired as ever, quite unlike the ethereal individual of his dreams; but for all that, her smile was like sunshine, and her eyes as roguish and friendly as ever.

Conscious of his dream he blushed, while greeting her with a friendly nod.

"Well, Matt? Here again, eh?" he said; adding to himself, "This won't do at all, my gentleman; if the young person continues to appear daily, the Caravan will have to 'move on.'"

Matt had evidently something on her mind. After looking at Brinkley thoughtfully for some minutes, she exclaimed abruptly:

"William Jones don't like you neither. No more does William Jones's father."

"Dear me!" said the young man. "I'm very sorry for that."

"He says—William Jones says—you're come here prying and spying. Do you?"

"My dear Matt," replied the young man lightly, "I come here as an humble artist, seeking subjects for my surpassing genius to work upon. If it is prying and spying to attempt to penetrate into the beauties of Nature—both scenic, animal, and human—I fear I must plead guilty; but otherwise—"

She interrupted him with an impatient exclamation, accompanied by a hitch of her pretty shoulders.

"Don't talk like that; for then I know you're chaffing. Talk serious, and I'll tell you something."

"All right. I'll be serious as a parson. Go ahead!"

"Mr. Monk, of Monkshurst, wants to marry *me*. He said so to William Jones."

The information was delivered with assumed carelessness; but after it was given, Matt watched the effect of it upon the hearer with precocious interest. Brinkley opened his eyes in very natural amazement.

"Come, come, Matt; you're joking."

"No, I ain't. It's true."

"But you're only a child—a very nice child, I admit—but to talk of holy matrimony in such a connection is—excuse my frankness—preposterous. People don't marry little girls."

But Matt did not consent to this proposition at all.

"I ain't a little girl," she affirmed with a deci-

sive nod of the head. "I'm sixteen, and I'm growed up."

The young man was amused, and could not refrain from laughing heartily. But the girl's brow darkened as she watched him, and her under lip fell as if she would like to cry.

"If you go on laughing," she said, "I'll run straight back home, and never come here no more."

"Well, I'll try to keep my countenance; but the idea is very funny. Really, now? Don't you see it in that light yourself?"

Certainly Matt did not, to judge from the expression of her face. She turned her head away; and Brinkley saw, to his surprise, that a tear was rolling down her cheek.

"Come, Matt," he said kindly; "you mustn't take this so seriously. Tell me all about it—there's a good girl."

"I will—if you won't laugh."

"I won't then—there."

"Well, when I was lying in my bed this morning I heard William Jones a-talking to some one. He thought I was asleep, but I got up and listened, and I heard Mr. Monk's voice; and he said, says he, 'She's over sixteen years old, and I'll marry her'; and William Jones said, 'Lord, Mr. Monk; what can

you be a-thinking about? Matt ain't old enough; and what's more she ain't fit to be the wife of a fine gentleman.' Then Mr. Monk he stamped with his foot, like he does when he's in a passion, and he said, says he, 'My mind's made up, William Jones, and I'm going to marry her before the year's out; and I don't care how soon.' Then I heard them moving about, and I crept back to bed and pretended to be fast asleep."

The young man's astonishment increased. There could be no doubt of the veracity and sincerity of the speaker; and the story she told was certainly puzzling. Brinkley made up his mind, without much reflection, that if Mr. Monk wanted to go through the marriage ceremony with that child, he had some special and mysterious reason for so doing; unless—which was scarcely possible—he was of a sentimental disposition, and, in the manner of many men advanced toward middle age, was enamored of Matt's youth and inexperience.

"Tell me, Matt," said Brinkley, after pondering the matter for some minutes; "tell me how long have you known this Mr. Monk?"

"Ever since I come ashore," was the reply.

"Humph!—is he well-to-do?—rich?"

Matt nodded emphatically.

"All Aberglyn belongs to him," she said; "and

the woods up there, and the farms, and the horses up at the big house, and—everything.”

“And though he is such a great person, he is very friendly with William Jones?”

“Oh, yes,” answered Matt; “and I think William Jones is afraid of him—sometimes; but he gives William Jones money for keeping *me*.”

“Oh, indeed! He gives him money, does he? That’s rather kind of him, you know.”

At this Matt shook her head with great decision, but said nothing. Greatly puzzled, the young man looked at her, and mused. It was clear that there was a mystery somewhere, and he was getting interested. Presently he invited Matt to sit down on the steps of the Caravan, and he placed himself at her side. He was too absorbed in speculation to notice how the girl colored and brightened as they sat there together.

“You have often told me that you came ashore,” he said, after a long pause. “I should like to know something of how it happened. I don’t exactly know what this ‘coming ashore’ means. Can you explain?”

“I don’t remember,” she replied; “but I know there was a ship, and it went to pieces, and I come to shore in a boat, or *summat*.”

“I see—and William Jones found you?”

"Mr. Monk, he found me, and gave me to William Jones to keep."

"I begin to understand. Of course, you were very little—a baby, in fact."

"William Jones says I could just talk some words, and that when he took me home I called him 'Papa.'"

"What was the name of the ship? Have you ever heard?"

"No," said Matt.

"Did you come ashore all alone? It is scarcely possible!"

"I come ashore by myself. All the rest was drowned."

"Was there no clew to who you were? Did nothing come ashore besides to show them who you were, or where you came from?"

Matt shook her head again. Once more the young man was lost in meditation. Doubtless it was owing to his abstraction of mind that he quietly placed his arm round Matt's waist, and kept it there. At first Matt went very red; then she glanced up at his face, and saw that his eyes were fixed thoughtfully on the distant sand-hills. Seeing he still kept silence, she moved a little closer to him, and said, very quietly:

"I didn't tell William Jones that you—kissed me!"

Brinkley started from his abstraction, and looked at the girl's blushing face.

"Eh? What did you say?"

"I didn't tell William Jones that you kissed me!"

These words seemed to remind the young man of the position of his arm; for he hastily withdrew it. Then the absurdity of the whole situation appeared to return upon him, and he broke into a burst of boyish laughter—at which his companion's face fell once more. It was clear that she took life seriously, and dreaded sarcasm.

"Matt," he said, "this won't do! This won't do at all!"

"What won't do?"

"Well—*this*!" he answered, rather ambiguously. "You're awfully young, you know—quite a girl, although, as you suggested just now, and, as you probably believe, you may be 'growed up.' You must—ha—you must look upon me as a sort of father, and all that sort of thing."

"You're too young to be my father," answered Matt, ingenuously.

"Well, say your big brother. I'm interested in you, Matt, very much interested, and I should really like to get to the bottom of the mystery about you; but we must not forget that we're—well, almost

strangers, you know. Besides," he added, laughing again cheerily, "you are engaged to be married, some day, to a gentleman of fortune."

Matt sprang up, with heaving bosom and flashing eyes.

"No, I ain't!" she said. "I hate *him*!"

"Hate the beautiful Monk, of Monkshurst! Monk the beneficent! Monk the sweet-spoken! Impossible!"

"Yes, I hate him," cried Matt; "and—and—when *he* kissed me, it made me sick."

"What, did he? Actually? Kissed you?"

As he spoke, the young man actually felt that he should like to assault the redoubtable Monk.

"Yes, he kissed me—once. If he kisses me again, I'll stick something into him, or scratch his face."

And Matt looked black as thunder, and set her pearly teeth angrily together.

"Sit down again, Matt!"

"I shan't—if you laugh."

"Oh, I'll behave myself. Come!"—and he added, as she returned to her place, "Did it make you sick when *I* kissed you?"

He was playing with fire. The girl's face changed in a moment, her eyes melted, her lips trembled, and all her expression became inexpressibly soft and dreamy.

Leaning gently toward him, she drooped her eyes, and then, seeing his hand resting on his knee, she took it in hers, and raised it to her lips.

"I should like to marry *you*," she said, and blushing, rested her cheek against his shoulder!

Now, our hero of the Caravan was a true-hearted young fellow, and a man of honor, and his position had become extremely embarrassing. He could no longer conceal from himself the discovery that he had made an unmistakable impression on Matt's unsophisticated heart. Hitherto he had looked upon her as a sort of *enfant terrible*, a very rough diamond; now he realized, with a shock of surprise and self-reproach, that she possessed, whether "grewed up" or not, much of the susceptibility of grown-up young ladies. It was clear that his duty was to disenchant her as speedily as possible, seeing that the discovery of the hopelessness of her attachment might, if delayed, cause her no little unhappiness.

In the mean time he suffered her to nestle to him. He did not like to shake her off roughly, or to say anything unkind. He glanced round into her face; the eyes were still cast down, and the cheeks were suffused with a warm, rich light, which softened the great freckles and made her complexion look, according to the image which suggested itself to his mind, like a nice ripe pear. She was certainly very

pretty. He glanced down at her hands which rested in her lap, and again noticed that they were unusually delicate and small. Her foot, which he next inspected, he could not criticise, for the boots she wore would have been a good fit for William Jones. But the whole outline of her figure, in spite of the hideous attire she wore, was fine and symmetrical, and altogether—

His inspection was interrupted by the girl herself. Starting as if from a delightful trance, she sprang to her feet, and cried:

“I can’t stop no longer. I’m going.”

“But the picture, Matt?” said Brinkley, rising also. “Shan’t I finish it to-day?”

“I can’t wait. William Jones wants to send me a message over to Pencroes, and if I don’t go, he’ll scold.”

“Very well, Matt.”

“But I’ll come,” she said, smiling, “to-morrow; and I’ll come in my Sunday clothes, somehow.”

“Don’t trouble. On reflection, I think you look nicer as you are.”

She lifted up her hat from the ground, and still hesitated as she put it on.

“Upon my word,” cried the artist; “those Welsh hats are very becoming. Good-by, Matt.”

She took his outstretched hand and waited an

instant, with her warm, brown cheek in profile temptingly near his lips. But he did not yield to the temptation, and after a moment's further hesitation, in which I fear she betrayed some little disappointment, Matt released her hand and sprang hurriedly away.

"Upon my word," muttered the young man, as he watched her figure receding in the distance, "the situation is growing more and more troublesome! I shall have to make a clean bolt of it, if this goes on. Fancy being caught in a flirtation with a wild ocean waif, a child of the wilderness, who never even heard of Lindley Murray? Really, it will never do!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DEVIL'S CALDRON.

It so happened that the young man of the Caravan had two considerable faults. The first fault my reader has, no doubt, already guessed: he was constitutionally lazy. The second fault will appear more clearly in the sequel: he was, also constitutionally, inquisitive. Now, his laziness was of that not un-

common kind which is capable of a great deal of activity, so long as that activity is unconscious, and not realized as being in the nature of *work*; and its possessor, therefore, would frequently, in his idle way, bestir himself a good deal; whereas, if he had been ordered to bestir himself, he would have yawned and resisted. Here his other constitutional defect came in, and set him prying into matters which in no way seriously concerned him. A little time before the period of his present excursion, when he was studying law in Dublin, and rapidly discovered that he loved artistic amateurship much better, he had often been known to work terribly hard at "cases" in which his curiosity was aroused; and I may add in passing that he had shown on these occasions an amount of shrewdness which would have made him an excellent lawyer, if his invincible objection to hard work, *quâ* work, had not invariably interfered.

No sooner was he left to his own meditations, which the faithful Tim (who had fortunately been away on a foraging expedition during the episode described in my last chapter) was not at hand to disturb, than our young gentleman began puzzling his brains over the curious information she had given him. The facts, which he had no reason to question, ranged themselves under four heads:

- (1) Matt had been cast ashore, fifteen years pre-

viously, at an age when she could pronounce the word "Papa." It followed, as a rational argument, that she had been, say, one year old, or thereabouts.

(2) Mr. Monk had found her, and given her into the care of William Jones, and had since handed that worthy sums of money for taking care of her. *Query*, What reason had the said Monk for exhibiting so much care for the child, unless he were a person of wonderfully benevolent disposition, which my hero was not at all inclined to believe?

(3) Said Monk and said Jones were on very familiar terms, which was curious, seeing the difference in their social positions. *Query* again, Was there any private reason, any mysterious knowledge, any secret shared in common, which bound their interests together?

(4) Last and most extraordinary of all, said Monk had now expressed his wish and intention of *marrying* the waif he had rescued from the sea, committed to the care of said Jones, and brought up in ragged ignorance, innocent of grace or grammar, on that lonely shore. *Query* again, and again, and yet again, What the deuce had put the idea into Monk's head; and was there at the bottom of it any deeper and more conceivable motive than the one of ordinary affection for a pretty, if uncultivated, child?

The more Charles Brinkley pondered all these

questions, the more hopelessly puzzled he became. But his curiosity, once roused, could not rest. He determined, if possible, to get to the midriff of the mystery. So intent was he on this object, which fitted in beautifully with his natural indolence, that he at once knocked off painting for the day, and after breakfasting on the fare with which Tim had by this time appeared, he strolled away toward the sea-shore.

He had not gone far when he saw approaching him a tall figure which he seemed to recognize. It came closer, and he saw that it was Mr. Monk, of Monkshurst.

This time Monk was on foot. He wore a dark dress, with knickerbockers and heavy shooting-boots, and carried a gun. A large dog, of the species lurcher, followed at his heels.

Brinkley was passing by without any salutation, when, to his surprise, the other paused and lifted his hat.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "We have met once before; and I think I have to apologize to you for unintentional incivility. The fact is—hum—I mistook you for a—vagrant! I did not know you were a gentleman."

So staggered was the artist with this greeting, that he could only borrow the vocabulary of Mr. Toots:

"Oh, it's of no consequence," he said, attempting to pass on.

But the other persevered.

"I assure you, Mr.—, Mr.— (I have not the pleasure of knowing your name), that I had no desire of offending you; and if I did so, I beg to apologize."

Brinkley looked keenly at the speaker. His words and manner were greatly at variance with his looks—even with the tone of his voice. Though he smiled and showed his teeth, a dark frown still disfigured his brow, and his mouth twitched nervously as if he were ill at ease.

Regarding him thus closely, Brinkley saw that he had been somewhat mistaken as to his age. He was considerably under fifty years of age, but his hair was mixed with gray, and his features strongly marked as with the scars of old passions. A handsome man, certainly; an amiable one, certainly not! Yet he had a peculiar air of power and breeding, as of one accustomed to command.

Curiosity overcame dislike, and the young man determined to receive Mr. Monk's overture as amiably as possible.

"I dare say it was a mistake," he said. "Gentlemen don't usually travel about in Caravans."

"You are an artist, I am informed," returned Monk.

"Something of that sort," was the reply. "I paint a little for pleasure."

"And do you find this neighborhood suit your purpose?—It is somewhat flat and unpicturesque."

"I rather like it," answered Brinkley. "It is pretty in summer; it must be splendid in winter, when the storms begin, and the uneventful career of our friend William Jones is varied by the excitement of wrecks."

How Monk's forehead darkened! But his face smiled still as he said:

"It is not often that shipwrecks occur now, I am glad to say."

"No?" said Brinkley, dryly. "They used to be common enough fifteen years ago?"

Their eyes met, and the eyes of Monk were full of fierce suspicion.

"Why fifteen years ago especially?"

The young man shrugged his shoulders.

"I was told only to-day of the loss of one great ship at that time. Matt told me, the little foundling. You know Matt, of course?"

"I know whom you mean. Excuse me, but you seem to be very familiar with her name?"

"I suppose I am," replied the young man. "Matt and I are excellent friends."

Monk did not smile now; all his efforts to do

so were ineffectual. With an expression of savage dislike, he looked in Brinkley's face, and his voice, though his words were still civil, trembled and grew harsh "as scrannel pipes of straw."

"May I ask if you purpose remaining long in the neighborhood?"

"I don't know," answered the artist. "My time is my own, and I shall stay as long as the place amuses me."

"If I can assist in making it do so, I shall be happy, sir."

"Thank you."

"Do you care for rabbit-shooting? If so, there is some sport to be had among the sand-hills.

"I never shoot anything," was the reply, "except, I suppose, 'folly as it flies'; though with what species of firearm that interesting sport is pursued," he added, as if to himself, "I haven't the slightest idea!"

"Well, good-day," said Monk, with an uneasy scowl. "If I can be of any service to you, command me!"

And, raising his hat again, he stalked away.

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"Now, what in the name of all that is wonderful, does Mr. Monk, of Monkshurst, mean by becoming so civil?"

This was the question the young man asked himself, as he strolled away seaward. He could not persuade himself that he had wronged Monk, who was in reality an amiable person, instead of a domineering bully; no, that suggestion was contradicted by every expression of the man's baleful and suspicious face. What, then, could be the explanation of his sudden attack of courtesy?

An idea! an inspiration! As it flashed into his mind, the young man gave vent to a prolonged whistle. Possibly, Monk was—jealous!

The idea was a preposterous one, and almost amusing. It was not to be conceived, on the first blush of it, that jealousy would make a surly man civil, a savage man gentle; it would rather have the contrary effect, unless—here Brinkley grew thoughtful—unless his gloomy rival had some sinister design which he wished to cloak with politeness?

But jealous of little Matt! Brinkley laughed heartily, when he fully realized the absurdity of the notion.

He crossed the sand-hills, and came again to the path which he and Matt had followed the previous day. A smart breeze was coming in from the southwest, and the air was fresh and cool, though sunny; but clouds were gathering to windward, and the weather was evidently broken. Reaching the cliffs,

he descended them, and came down on the rocks beneath. A long jagged point ran out from the spot where he stood, and the water to leeward of the same was quite calm, though rising and falling in strong troubled swells. So bright and tempting did it look in that sheltered place, that he determined to have a swim.

He stripped leisurely, and, placing his clothes in a safe place, took a header off the rocks. It was clear at once that he was a powerful swimmer. Breasting the smooth swell, he struck out from shore, and, when he had gone about a hundred yards, floated lazily on his back and surveyed the shore.

The cliffs were not very high, but their forms were finely picturesque. Here and there were still green creeks, fringed with purple weed; and large shadowy caves, hewed roughly in the side of the crags; and rocky islets, covered with slimy weed and awash with the lapping water. A little to the right of the spot from which he had dived, the cliff seemed hollowed out, forming a wide passage which the sea entered with a tramp and a rush and a roar.

Toward this passage Brinkley swam. He knew the danger of such places, for he had often explored them both in Cornwall and the West of Ireland;

but he had confidence in his own natatory skill. Approaching the shore leisurely with strong, slow strokes, he paused outside the passage, and observed that the sea-swell, entering the opening, rushed and quickened itself like a rapid shooting to the fall, turning at the base of the cliff into a cloud of thin prismatic spray. Suddenly, through the top of the spray, a cloud of rock pigeons emerged, winging their flight rapidly along the crags.

Brinkley knew by this last phenomenon that the spray concealed the entrance of some large subterranean cavern. If any doubt had remained on his mind, it would have been dispelled by the appearance of a solitary pigeon, which, leaving its companions, wavered lightly back, flew back through the spray with a rapid downward flight, and disappeared.

He was floating a little nearer, with an enjoyment deepened by the sense of danger, when a figure suddenly appeared on the rocks close by him, wildly waving its hands.

"Keep back! Keep back!" cried a voice.

He looked at the figure, and recognized William Jones. He answered him, but the sound of his voice was drowned by the roar from the rocks. Then William Jones shouted again more indistinctly, and repeated his excited gestures. It was clear that he was warning the swimmer against some hidden

danger. Brinkley took the warning, and struck out from the shore, and then back to the place where he had left his clothes.

Watching his opportunity, he found a suitable spot and clambered in upon the rocks. He had just dried himself and thrown on some of his clothes, when he saw William Jones standing near and watching him.

"How are you?" asked the young man, with a nod. "Pray, what did you mean by going on in that absurd way just now?"

"What did I mean?" repeated William, with a little of his former excitement. "Look ye, now, I was waving you back from the Devil's Caldron. There's many a man been drowned there, and been wash'd away Lord knows where. I've heerd tell," he added, solemnly, "they're carried right down into the Devil's own kitchen."

"I'm much obliged to you, Mr. Jones, but I'm used to such dangers, and I think I know how to take care of myself."

William Jones shook his head a little angrily.

"Don't you come here no more, that's all!" he said, and muttering ominously to himself, retired. But he only ascended the neighboring crag, and squatting himself there like a bird of ill-omen, kept his eyes on the stranger.

Having dressed himself, Brinkley climbed in the same direction. He found William seated on the edge of the crag, looking the reverse of amiable, and amusing himself by throwing stones in the direction of the sea.

"You seem to know this place well?" said the young man, standing over him.

William Jones replied, without looking up:

"I ought to; I were born here. Father were born here. Know it? I wish I know'd as well how to make my own fortin'."

"And yet they tell me," observed the other, watching him slyly, "that William Jones of Aber-glyn has money in the bank, and is a rich man!"

He saw William's color change at once; but recovering himself at once, the worthy gave a contemptuous grunt, and aimed a stone spitefully at a large gull which just then floated slowly by.

"Who told you *that*?" he asked, glancing quickly up, and then looking down again. "Some tomfool, wi' no more sense in 'un than that gull. Rich? I wish I was, I do!"

Brinkley was amused, and a little curious. Laughing gayly, he threw himself down by William's side. William shifted his seat uneasily, and threw another stone.

"My dear Mr. Jones," said the young man, as-

suming the flippant style which Matt found so irritating, "I have often wondered how you get your living."

William started nervously.

"You are, I believe, a fisherman by profession; yet you never go fishing. You possess a boat; but you are seldom seen to use it. You are not, I think, of a poetical disposition; yet you spend your days in watching the water, like a poet, or a person in love. I conclude, very reluctantly, that your old habits stick to you, and that you speculate on the disasters of your fellow-creatures."

"What d'ye mean, master?" grunted William, puzzled and a little alarmed by this style of address.

"A nice wreck, now, would admirably suit your tastes? A well-laden Indiaman, smashing up on the reef yonder, would lend sunshine to your existence, and deepen your faith in a paternal Providence? Eh, Mr. Jones?"

"I don't know nowt about no wrecks," was the reply. "They're no consarn o' mine."

"Ah, but I have heard you lament the good old times, when wrecking was a respectable occupation, and when there were no impertinent coast-guards to interfere with respectable followers of the business. By the way, I have often wondered, Mr. Jones, if

popular report is true, and if, among these cliffs or the surrounding sand-hills, there is buried treasure, cast up from time to time by the sea, and concealed by energetic persons like yourself?"

William Jones could stand this no longer. Looking as pale as it was possible for so rubicund a person to become, and glancing round him suspiciously, he rose to his feet.

"I know nowt o' that," he said. "If there is summat, I wish I could find it; but sech things never come the way of honest chaps like me. Good-mornin', master! Take a poor man's advice, and don't you go swimming no more near the Devil's Caldron!"

So saying, he walked off in the direction of the deserted village. Presently Brinkley rose and followed him, keeping him steadily in view. From time to time William Jones looked round, as if to see whether the other was coming; lingering when Brinkley lingered, hastening his pace when Brinkley hastened his. As an experiment, Brinkley turned and began walking back toward the cliffs. Glancing round over his shoulder, he saw that William Jones had also turned, and was walking back.

"Curious!" he reflected. "The innocent one is keeping me in view. I have a good mind to breathe him!"

He struck off from the path, and hastened, running rather than walking, toward the sand-hills. So soon as he was certain that he was followed, he began to run in good earnest. To his delight, William began running too. He plunged among the sand-hills, and was soon engaged busily running up and down them, hither and thither. From time to time he caught a glimpse of his pursuer. It was an exciting chase. When he had been engaged in it for half-an-hour, and was almost breathless himself, he suddenly paused in one of the deep hollows, threw himself down on his back, and lit a cigar. A few minutes afterward, he heard a sound as of violent puffing and breathing, and the next instant William Jones, panting, gasping, perspiring at every pore, appeared above him.

"How d'ye do, Mr. Jones?" he cried, gayly. "Come and have a cigar!"

Instead of replying, William Jones looked completely thunderstruck, and after glaring feebly down and muttering incoherently, disappeared as suddenly as he had come.

Brinkley finished his cigar leisurely, and then strolled back to the Caravan.

CHAPTER IX.

A DISCOVERY.

THE young man of the Caravan was now thoroughly convinced that one of two things must be true: either that William Jones had been instructed to keep a watch upon him, or that he, William Jones, had a secret of some sort which he was anxious not to have revealed. After both suppositions had been duly weighed, the second was accepted as the most likely; and it forthwith received the young man's consideration.

If there was a secret, he argued, it was in some way connected—firstly, with William Jones's worldly prosperity; secondly, with the reports current of treasure hidden in times past among the sand-hills or the dangerous caverns of the sea. Was it possible, after all, that those reports were true, and that in some mysterious manner Jones had become acquainted with the hiding-place? It seemed very improbable for many reasons, one of the chief being the man's extreme poverty, which appeared to touch the very edge of sheer starvation.

A little inquiry in the neighborhood, however, elicited the information that Jones, despite his abject penury, was certainly well-to-do, and had money in

the bank of the neighboring market-town; that the ruined village of Aberglyn belonged almost entirely to him; and that, in short, he was by nature and habit a miserly person, who would prefer hoarding up whatever he possessed to purchasing with it the commonest necessities of life.

An old coast-guard, whom Brinkley found next day on the station, was his chief informant.

"Don't you believe him, sir," said this old salt, "if he tells you he's poor. He's a shark, William Jones is, and couldn't own up even to his own father. It's my belief he's got gold hidden somewhere among them sand-hills, let alone what he's got in the savings-bank. Ah, he's a artful one, is William Jones."

Brinkley had said nothing of his own private suspicions, but had merely introduced in a general way the subject of Jones's worldly position. Further conversation with Tim, who had made a few straggling acquaintances in the district, corroborated the other testimony. The young man became more and more convinced that William Jones was worth studying.

Matt had not turned up that morning. Instead of looking after her, Brinkley took another stroll toward the vicinity of the Devil's Caldron. He had not gone far before he discovered that he was

watched again. The figure of William Jones followed in the distance, but keeping him well in view.

It was certainly curious.

He walked over to the cliffs and looked down at the scene of yesterday's bathing adventure. A strong wind was blowing, and the waves were surging up the rocks with deafening roar and foamy spume. The place looked very ugly, particularly near the Caldron. All the passage was churned to milky white, and the sound from beneath was, to quote an old simile, like the roar of innumerable chariots.

He glanced over his shoulder and saw the head of William Jones eagerly watching, the body being hidden behind an intervening rock.

"Strange!" he reflected. "My predatory friend can't keep his treasure, if he possesses any, down in that watery gulf. Yet whenever I come near it his manner tells me that I am 'warm,' as they say in the game of hide-and-seek."

To test the matter a little further, he set off on a brisk walk along the cliffs, leaving the Caldron behind. He found, as he had suspected, that he was no longer followed. Returning as he came, and resuming his old position, he saw William Jones immediately re-appear.

That day he discovered no ~~clue~~ to the mystery, *clue* nor the next, nor the next again, though on each day he went through a similar performance. Strange to say, Matt had not put in an appearance, and for reasons of his own he had thought it better not to seek her.

On the morning of the third day—a dark, chilly morning, after a night of rain—Tim put his head into the Caravan, where his master was seated at his easel, and grinned delightedly.

“Mr. Charles! She’s come, sor!”

“Who the deuce has come?” cried Brinkley.

“The *lady*, your honor, to have her picture taken. Will I show her into the parlor?”

But as he spoke Matt pushed him aside and entered. She wore her best clothes, but looked a little pale and anxious, Brinkley thought, greeting her with a familiar nod.

“So you’ve come at last! Tim, get out, you rascal. I thought you had given me up.”

He assumed a coldness, though he felt it not, for he had made up his mind not to “encourage” the young person.

“I couldn’t come before—they wouldn’t let me. But last night William Jones he didn’t come home, and I broke open the box and took out my clothes, and ran straight off here.”

Her face fell as she proceeded, for she could not fail to notice the coolness of the young man's greeting.

"Well, since you *have* come we'll get to work," said Brinkley. "It's chilly and damp outside, so we'll remain here in shelter."

Matt took off her hat, and then proceeded to divest herself of her coarse jacket, revealing for the first time the low-necked silk dress beneath. Meantime the young man placed the sketch in position. Turning presently, he beheld Matt's transformation.

Old and shabby as the dress was, torn here and there, and revealing beneath glimpses of coarse stockings and clumsy boots, it became her wonderfully. As a result of much polishing with soap and water her face shone again, and her arms and neck were white as snow. Thus attired, Matt looked no longer a long, shambling girl, but a tall, bright, resplendent, young lady.

It was no use. Brinkley could not conceal his admiration. Matt's arms alone were enough to make a painter wild with delight.

"Why, Matt, you look positively magnificent. I had no idea you were so pretty."

The girl blushed with pleasure.

The young man worked away for a good hour

and a half, at the end of which time he put the finishing touch to the sketch.

"*Finis coronat opus!*" he cried. "Look, Matt!"

Matt examined the picture with unconcealed delight. It was herself, a little idealized, but quite characteristic, and altogether charming.

"May I take it home?" she asked, eagerly.

"I'll get you to leave it a few days longer. I must get a frame for it, Matt, and then you shall have it all complete. Now, let me look at you again," he said, taking her by both hands and looking up at her sunny face. "Are you pleased? Will you take care of the picture for the painter's sake?"

Matt's answer was embarrassing. She quietly sat down on his knee, and gave him a smacking kiss.

"Matt! Matt!" he cried. "You mustn't."

But she put her warm arm round his neck, and rested her cheek against his shoulder.

"I should like to have pretty dresses and gold bracelets and things, and to go away from William Jones and to stay with *you*."

"My dear," said Brinkley, laughing, "you couldn't. It wouldn't be proper."

"Why not?" asked Matt, simply.

"The world is censorious, little one. I am a young man; you are a young lady. We shall have to shake hands soon and say good-by. There, there,"

he continued, seeing her eyes fill with tears, "I'm not gone yet. I shall stay as long as I can, only—really—you must look upon me as quite an old fellow. I *am* awfully old, you know, compared to you."

He gently disengaged himself, and Matt sat down on a camp-stool close by. Her face had grown very wistful and sad.

"Matt," he said, anxious to change the subject, "tell me something more about William Jones."

"I hate William Jones. I hate everybody—but *you*."

"Really?"

"Yes, I do."

"Well, I feel greatly flattered. But about the gentle Jones? You say he was out all last night."

Matt nodded.

"He goes out nigh every night," she said, "and often don't come home till morning. Sometimes he finds things and brings 'em. He finds bits o' gold, and old ropes, and bottles o' rum."

"Very odd. Where?"

"He don't tell; *I* know."

"I wish you'd tell me, Matt. Do. I have a particular reason for wanting the information."

Matt hesitated.

"You won't say I told? William Jones would be downright wild, he would."

"I'll keep the secret faithfully. Now?"

Thus urged, Matt informed her friend that on two occasions, out of curiosity, she had followed her guardian on his nightly pilgrimages, and watched him go in the direction of the Devil's Caldron. On both occasions the night was very dark. On getting clear of the coast-guard station, and among the sand-hills, Jones had lighted a lantern which he carried. Trembling and afraid, she had followed the light along the cliffs, then out among the sand-hills. But all at once the light and its bearer had disappeared into the solid earth, leaving her to find her way home in terror.

The explanation of all this was, in Matt's opinion, very simple. William Jones was a bad man, and went to "visit the fairies."

"Yes," she cried, "and every time he goes, the fairies give him summat, and he brings it home."

"Each time you followed him," asked Brinkley, thoughtfully, "he disappeared at about the same place?"

"Yes," said Matt; "and the light and him sunk right down and never come up again."

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The result of the information thus communicated was to leave the young man of the Caravan far more curious than ever. He determined to turn the

tables on William Jones, and to watch his movements, not in the day-time, but during the summer night, waiting for his appearance in the immediate neighborhood of the Devil's Caldron.

The first night he saw nothing—it was stormy, with wild gusts of rain. The second night was equally uneventful. Nothing daunted, he went for a third and last time, and lay in the moonlight on the cliffs, looking toward the village.

The night was dark and cloudy, but from time to time the moon came out with sudden brilliance on the sea, which was gently stirred by a breeze from the land.

He waited for several hours. About midnight he rose to go home. As he did so he was startled by the sound of oars, and, lying down, perceived a small boat approaching on a silver patch of moonlit sea.

The moon came out, and he saw that the occupant of the boat was a solitary man.

It approached rapidly, making direct for the Devil's Caldron. Lying down on his face and peeping over, Brinkley saw it stop short just outside the foaming passage, while the man stood up, stooped, lifted something heavy from the bottom, and threw it overboard. Then, after watching for a moment a dark object which drifted shoreward, right into the

Caldron, he rowed away until he reached a sheltered creek close to the scene of the swimming adventure. Here he ran the boat ashore and leaped out.

The next minute Brinkley heard him coming up the cliffs.

Trembling with excitement he lay down flat on his face and waited. Presently the man emerged on the top of the cliffs, within a few yards of Brinkley's hiding-place. Just then the moon flashed brightly out, and Brinkley recognized him!

It was William Jones, carrying on his shoulders something like a loaded sack, and, dangling from his left wrist, a horn-lantern.

He looked round once or twice and then hurried toward the sand-hills. Brinkley followed stealthily. The moon now went in, and it became pitch dark. Presently Jones paused, set down his load, and lit the lantern; then he hurried on.

For fifty or sixty yards a coarse carpet of green-sward covered the cliffs; then the sand-hills began. Passing over the first sand-hill, Jones disappeared. Quick as thought the young man followed, and, peering over, saw the light in the hollow beneath; it rose higher and higher till it reached the top of the next sand-hill, where it paused. Crawling on hands and knees, Brinkley slipped down into the hollow, and then crept upward half-way up the

mound; he found a huge rock, behind which he crouched and peeped.

As he did so, William Jones, light in hand, seemed to dive down into the solid earth and disappear.

CHAPTER X.

THE SECRET OF THE CAVE.

For a minute after the disappearance Charles Brinkley lay as if petrified; and, indeed, he was altogether lost in wonder. What had happened? Had an earthquake swallowed the mysterious one, or had he tumbled down in a fit? Brinkley waited and watched; five minutes had passed, ten minutes, and still the light did not re-emerge. At last, overcome by his curiosity, Brinkley rose, and, stooping close to the ground, crept from the rock behind which he had lain concealed, and crawled across the summit of the sand-hill. Suddenly he stopped short and went down on hands and knees, for he now clearly discerned, coming out of the solid earth or sand, the glimmer of the light.

It glimmered, then disappeared again. Just then the moon slipped out of her cloud, illuminating the

hillocks with vitreous rays; and he perceived, close by him, a dark hole, opening into the very heart of the hillock.

He crept closer and looked down, but could see nothing. He held his head over the hole and listened; all he heard was a dull, hollow moaning, like the sound of the sea. The light of the moon, however, enabled him to perceive that the hole had been covered with a loose piece of wood, or lid, about four feet square, and with an iron ring-bolt in the center; which lid was now lying by the side of the opening, ready to be replaced. A number of large pieces of stone, such as were strewn everywhere about the sand-hills, lay piled close by.

He lay for some time waiting and listening. All at once, far beneath him, the light glimmered again. Quick as thought he rose and crept away, only just in time; for he had no sooner regained the shelter of the rock, and crouched there watching, than he saw the light re-emerge, accompanied by a human head; a human body followed, and then he clearly discerned William Jones standing in the moonlight without the burden he had previously carried, and holding in his hand a lantern.

Setting the lantern down, William busied himself for several minutes, and finally, having concluded the work on which he was engaged, extinguished

the light. Then, after glancing suspiciously round him on every side, he walked rapidly down the sand-hill, and disappeared in the direction of the sea.

Not until he distinctly heard the plash of oars, and saw the black silhouette of the boat pass out from the shadow of the rock on to the moonlit sea, did Brinkley again begin to stir; and even then he did so very cautiously, lest his figure should be perceived against the moonlight by the lynx-eyed rower. Creeping on hands and knees, he again crawled to the mysterious spot, and found, as he had indeed anticipated, that the hole was covered up, and the wooden lid or trap-door so carefully covered with stones and loose sand as to be completely hidden.

His first impulse was to displace the *débris*, and at once to explore the mysterious place; but reflecting that he was unprovided with lights of any kind, and that the cavity below would most certainly be in total darkness, he determined to postpone his visit of inspection until daylight. By this time there was no sight or sound of the boat. Rising to his feet, he mused. It was all very well to talk of returning another time, but how was he to find the spot? The sea of sandy hillocks stretched on every side, and he knew by experience how difficult it was to distinguish one hillock from another. As to the

cairns of loose stones, such cairns were nearly as numerous as the hillocks themselves.

At last he thought of the rock where he had first concealed himself. Such rocks were numerous too; but pulling out his case of crayons, he marked the base of the rock with a small streak of color. Finally, remembering that the drift sand might cover this mark so made, he drew out his penknife, and made a large cross in the hard sand. Having taken these precautions, he made the best of his way down to the cliffs, and, following the open greensward which fringed the crags, wandered back to the Caravan.

At daybreak the next day he strolled back along the crags, first taking a bird's-eye view of the village; and perceiving no sight of William Jones, who had doubtless no suspicion that he would rise so early, he soon found the spot where he had stood overnight, watching the approach of the boat; and first reconnoitring the neighborhood, struck off among the sand-hills. At first he was guided by footprints, but as the sand grew harder, these disappeared. At length, after a somewhat bewildering search, he found the sand-hill he sought, the rock with his mark upon it, the cross marked in the ground, and, finally, the well-concealed mouth of the hole.

He looked keenly to right and left. No one was

visible. Stooping down he displaced the stones and loose sand, and disclosed the trap-door with its iron ring. A long pull, a strong pull, and up came the trap. Open Sesame! Beneath him was a dark cavity, with a slanting path descending into the bowels of the earth.

Anxious to lose no time, he squeezed himself through the aperture, and began descending. While he did so he heard the hollow roaring he had heard the night before. As he proceeded he drew out a box of matches and a candle, which he lit. Proceeding cautiously on his back, and restraining himself with his elbows from too rapid descent, he found himself surrounded not by sand, but by solid rock, and, peering downward, saw that he was looking down into a large subterranean cave.

Just beneath him was a flight of steps cut in the solid rock. Descending these carefully, for they were slippery as ice, he reached the bottom, and found it made of sea-gravel and loose shells, forming, indeed, a decline like the sea-shore itself, to the edge of which, filling about half the cavern, the waters of the sea crept with a long, monotonous moan. Approaching the water's edge, he saw facing him the solid back of the cliff, but just at the base there was an opening, a sort of slit, almost touching the waves at all times, quite touching them when the

swell rose, and through this opening crept beams of daylight, turning the waves to a clear malachite green.

The mystery was now clear enough. The cave communicated directly with the sea, but in such a way as to make an entrance for any large object impossible from that direction.

Turning his back upon the water, and holding up the candle, he examined the interior. The damp black rocks rose on every side, and from the roof hung spongy and hideous weeds, like those fungi to be seen in sunless vaults of wine; but piled against the inner wall was a hoard of treasures to make a smuggler's mouth water or turn a wrecker's brain.

Puncheons of rum and other spirits, bales of wool, planks of mahogany and pine, oars, broken masts, coils of rope, tangles of running rigging, flags of all nations, and articles of such material as is used on shipboard, swinging-tables, brass swinging-lamps, masthead-lanterns, and hammocks; enough and to spare, in short, to fit out a small fleet of vessels. Lost in amazement, Brinkley examined this extraordinary hoard, the accumulation doubtless of many years. All at once his eye fell upon a large canvas bag, rotten with age, and gaping open. It was as full as it could hold with pieces of gold, bearing the superscription of the Mint of Spain.

O William Jones! William Jones! And all this was yours, at least by right of plunder, upon the Queen's seaway; all this which, turned into cash, would have made a man rich beyond the dreams of avarice, was the possession of one who lived like a miserly beggar, grudged himself and his flesh and blood the common necessities of life, and had never been known, from boyhood upward, to give a starving fellow-creature so much as a crust of bread, or to drop a penny into the poor-box. O William Jones! William Jones!

The above reflection and parenthesis belong, not to the present writer, but to my adventurous discoverer, the captain of the Caravan.

As Brinkley proceeded on his tour of inspection, he became more and more struck with wonder. Nothing seemed too insignificant, or too preposterously useless, for secretion in that extraordinary ship's cavern. There were mops and brooms, there were holy-stones, there were "squeegees," there were canisters of tinned provisions, there were bags of weevil'd biscuits, there were sacks of potatoes (which esculents, long neglected, had actually sprouted, and put forth leaves), there were ring-bolts, there were tin mugs and pannikins, and, lastly, *mirabile dictu*, there were books—said books lay piled on the top of a heap of sacks, and were in the last stage of

mildew and decay. For what purpose had they been carried there? Certainly not to form a library, for William Jones could not read. As curiosity deepened, Brinkley opened some of the forlorn volumes, covered with mildew, and full of hideous crawling things. Most were in foreign tongues, but there were several English novels half a century old, and a book of famous "Voyages," also in English. Near to them were some large paper rolls—ship's charts, evidently, and almost falling to pieces. And on the top of the charts was a tiny Prayer-book, slime-covered and dripping wet!

What possessed Brinkley to examine the Prayer-book I can not determine, but in after years he always averred that it was an inspiration. At any rate, he did open it, and saw that the fly-leaf was covered with writing, yellow, difficult to decipher, fast fading away. But what more particularly attracted his attention was a loose piece of parchment, fastened to the title-page with a rusty pin, and covered also with written characters.

Fixing the candle on a nook in the damp wall, he inspected the title-page, and deciphered these words:

"Christmas-Eve, 1864, on board the ship *Trinidad*, fast breaking up on the Welsh coast. If any Christian soul should find this book and these lines

where I place them, if they sink not with their bearer (on whom I leave my last despairing blessing) to the bottom of the sea, or if God in His infinite mercy should spare and save the little child." (The book trembled in his hand, as he read. The writing went on :) "I cast her adrift in her cradle in sight of shore, on a little raft made by my own hands. 'Tis a desperate hope, but He can work miracles, and if it is His Will, she may be saved. Attached to this holy book are the proofs of her poor dead mother's marriage and my darling's birth. May she live to inherit my name. Signed, MATTHEW THORPE MONK, Colonel, 15th Cavalry, Bengal."

The mystery was deepening indeed!

At last Brinkley thrust the book and its contents into his pocket, and after one look round, took the candle, and made his way up the rocks, and out of the cave. When he saw the light of day above him he blew out the light, and crawled up through the aperture. Then, standing on the lonely sand-hill, he surveyed the scene on every side. There was no sign of any living soul.

Carefully, but rapidly, he returned the trap-door to its place, covered it with the stones and liberal handfuls of loose sand, and walked away, taking care, for the first hundred yards, to obliterate his footprints as he went.

CHAPTER XI.

MYSTERIOUS BEHAVIOR OF THE YOUNG GENTLEMAN.

ABOUT this time Matt noticed a curious change come over her artist friend. He was more thoughtful, and consequently less entertaining. Often when she appeared and began chatting to him about affairs in which she thought he might take some interest, she had the mortification not merely of eliciting no reply but of finding that he had not heard a word of her conversation.

Now this style of proceeding would certainly have caused her some annoyance, but for one compensating fact which put the balance entirely on the other side. It was evident that, despite the change, Brinkley's interest in Matt was not lessening; nay, it rather seemed to be on the increase; and this fact Matt, very woman as she was, was quick to perceive.

Very often, on looking suddenly at him, she found his eyes fixed wonderingly and sympathetically upon her. She asked him on one occasion what he was thinking about.

"*You, Matt,*" he answered, promptly. "I was trying to imagine," he continued, seeing her blush and hang her head, "how you would look in silks and velvets; got up, in fact, like a grand demoiselle.

What would you say, now, if a good fairy were to find you out some day and were to offer to change you from what you are to a fine young lady—would you say Yes?"

Matt reflected for a moment, then she followed her feminine instinct, and nodded her head vigorously.

"Ah!—by the way, Matt, can you *read*?"

"Print, not writing."

"And write?"

"Just a bit!"

"Who taught you? William Jones?"

"No, that he didn't; I learned off Tim Penrenn down village. William Jones, he can't read and he can't write; no more can William Jones's father."

This last piece of information set the young man thinking so deeply that the rest of the interview became rather dull for Matt. When she rose to go, however, he came out of his abstraction, and asked her if she would return on the following day.

"I don't know—p'raps!" she said.

"Ah," returned the young man, assuming his flippant manner, "you find me tedious company, I fear. The fact is, I am generally affected in this manner in the present state of the moon. But come to-morrow, Matt. Your presence does me good."

However, the next day passed, and the next again, and there was no sign of Matt. He began to think the child had taken offense, and that he would have to seek her in her own home, when her opportune appearance prevented the journey. He was taking his breakfast one morning inside the Caravan, when he suddenly became conscious that Matt was standing outside watching him.

"Oh, you are there, are you?" he said, coolly. "Come in and have some breakfast, Matt."

He rose negligently, went to the door, and held forth his hand; Matt took it, gave one spring, and landed inside the vehicle.

"Tim, another knife and fork for the young lady—some more eggs and milk; in fact, anything you've got!" said Brinkley, as he placed a seat for Matt at the little table.

Tim gave a grunt of dissatisfaction. This "bold colleen," as he called her, was becoming too much for him, but he perforce obeyed his master's commands. Matt sat down and ate with an appetite; Brinkley played negligently with his knife, and watched her.

"It is two days since you were here, Matt," said he. "I was seriously thinking of coming to look for you. Why wouldn't you come before?"

"'Twasn't that!" said Matt. "I couldn't!"

"Couldn't? Why?"

"Why, *he* wouldn't let me, William Jones. He says he'll smash me if I come here and talk to you."

As Matt spoke her bosom heaved and her eyes flashed fire.

"He ain't at home to-day," she said, in answer to the young man's query concerning the ex-wrecker; "he's gone up to market-town and won't be back before night."

As Brinkley looked at her a sudden thought seemed to strike him.

"Matt," he said, "you and I will go wreck-hunting this afternoon; that is, if you've no objection."

She certainly had none: wherever he went she seemed willing to follow. In a very little while the two had started off. It was Brinkley who led this time, Matt walking along beside him like a confiding child.

"By the way, Matt," he said, presently, "you told me once of treasures being hidden among the sand-hills. Did anybody ever find any?"

"Not that I know on."

"William Jones, for instance?"

"No. Leastways *I* don't know."

"Well, what would you say, Matt, if I told you that *I* had found one?"

"If you?"

"Yes. I wonder if you can keep a secret? Yes, on reflection I think you can. Now, before we go any further, Matt, first you place your hand in mine, and promise never to mention until I give you permission what I am about to confide in you now."

Matt's curiosity was aroused.

"All right," she replied, eagerly, *"I shan't tell."*

"Very good," replied Brinkley; "we will now proceed."

They passed on among the sand-hills, and came to the entrance of the cave. Brinkley removed the stones and sand from the hole, and entered. Breathless with curiosity, Matt followed. They reached the bottom. Brinkley struck a light, and pointed out to her all the wonderful treasures which the cave contained. It was such a surprise to the girl that for a time she could do nothing but stare and stare in speechless wonder. Whistling gayly, Brinkley turned about the casks of rum and brandy, and thrust his hands into the bags and let the gleaming gold slip through his fingers.

Matt's amazement turned into awe.

"Don't," she said, in a fearful whisper; "it belongs to the fairies."

Brinkley laughed.

"It belongs to a very substantial fairy, Matt, but

I don't think that to-day I will mention that fairy's name. Did you ever see so much money in all your life before, Matt?"

She shook her head, but her eyes were still fixed upon the gold.

"I see," observed Brinkley, flippantly, "the sight of that gold fascinates you. Well, so it did me at first, but you see what use does. I can regard it now with comparative calmness. However, I have a particular wish to accustom *you* to the sight of wealth; therefore, I shall bring you here and show you this now and again. Come, Matt, tell me what you would do if you were very rich, if all this flotsam and jetsam in fact belonged to you."

Without the slightest hesitation Matt replied:

"I should give it to *you*—leastways half of it."

"Ah, the reply is characteristic, and clearly shows you are not at present fitted to become the possessor of riches. But I shall bring you to the proper state of mind in time, no doubt. The next time I ask you a similar question you will propose to give me a third, the next an eighth, and so on, until you will finally come to a proper state of mind, and decline to give me any at all. And now that I have made you the sharer of my secret we will go."

They left the cave once more and made their

way back across the sand-hills, Brinkley pausing to obliterate their footprints as they went. When they had proceeded some distance he paused, and took the girl's hand.

"Good-by, Matt," said he. "If it wasn't for that promised smashing I should certainly see you home."

"Then do," returned Matt. "I don't care if he *does* smash me!"

"Probably not, but I do. It would be an episode in your career which it would not be pleasant to reflect upon—therefore, good-by, Matt—and—and God bless you, my girl!"

He gave her a fatherly salute upon the forehead; a bright flush overspread her cheek as she bounded away. Brinkley watched her until she was out of sight, then he turned, and strolled quietly on in the direction of the Caravan.

"It's a strange game," he said, "and requires careful waiting. I wonder what my next move ought to be?"

He thought very deeply, but when he reached the Caravan he found he had come to no definite conclusion as to his plans. He therefore partook cheerfully of the repast which Tim had prepared for him, and after he had smoked a couple of pipes in the open air he retired to rest.

The next morning he began pondering again.

"I have got my trump card," he said to himself, "but how to play up to it? I have a splendid hand, but it will want skillful managing if I am to win the game. One false move would do for me, for my opponents are crafty as foxes, and they are two against one. What is my right move, I wonder? I wish some good fairy would guide me!"

He took out his pipe, which was his usual consolator, and smoked while he took a few turns on the greensward outside the Caravan.

Suddenly an idea struck him.

"I think I'll pay a domiciliary visit to Mr. Monk," he said. "I can meet him now on pretty equal terms. If I hint a few things to him, the amiable gentleman may think of becoming just."

He called up Tim, and sent him on some trivial errand down to the village. As soon as he was well out of the way Brinkley entered the Caravan, produced some papers from the inner pocket of his coat, and locked them up securely in his trunk.

"So far so good," he said. "My amiable friend may not be in an amiable mood, and I don't wish him to get any advantage of me!"

He did not even take with him the key of the box, but having attached to it a small piece of paper, on which were some written instructions, he

hid it in the Caravan and started off upon his journey.

It was a dark, gloomy morning, giving every promise of coming storms. As he passed through the wood which surrounded Monkshurst House, the wind whistled softly among the trees, making a moan like the sound of human voices.

"A gloomy place," said Brinkley; "a fit residence for such as he. Any dark deed might be committed here, and who would know?"

The path which he followed was a neglected carriage-drive, strewn with stones, overgrown with weeds, and bordered on either side by the thick trees of the forest. Presently the trees parted, and he came in view of the house.

A large, gloomy-looking building, as neglected as the woodland in the center of which it stood. It seemed as if only a part of it was inhabited, and the large garden at its back was unprotected by any wall, and full of overgrown fruit-trees.

The door was opened by a grim elderly woman. He inquired for Mr. Monk, and was informed that he was at home. The next minute he was standing in a lonely library, where the owner of the house was busy writing. Monk rose, and the two stood face to face.

CHAPTER XII.

BURIED!

It is not my purpose to describe the interview which took place between my hero and Mr. Monk. Suffice it to say that when the young man again emerged from the gloomy shadows of the dwelling there was a curious smile upon his face, while Mr. Monk, who had followed him to the door, and watched his retreating figure, wore a horrible expression of hatred and fear.

No sooner had he disappeared than Monk left the house also, and, following a foot-path through the woods, made straight for William Jones's cottage. Entering unceremoniously, he found that worthy seated beside the hearth; without a word he rushed upon him, seized him by the throat, and began pummeling his head upon the wall.

The attack was so sudden that for several minutes William Jones offered no resistance whatever. Indeed, so passive was he, and so violent was the rage of his opponent, that there was every prospect of his head being beaten to a jelly. Presently, however, Monk's fury abating, his unfortunate victim was allowed to pick himself up. He sat and stared be-

fore him, while Monk, looking like the Evil One himself, glared savagely in his face.

"You villain! You accursed, treacherous scoundrel!" he said. "Tell me what you've done, or I'll kill you!"

But William Jones was unconscious of having done anything, and he said as much, whereupon Monk's fury seemed about to rise again.

"Mr. Monk," cried William Jones, in terror, "look ye now, tell me what's the matter?"

"I mean you to tell *me* what you have been hiding from me all these years. Something came ashore with that child—something that might lead to her identity, and you have kept it, thinking to realize money upon it, or to have me in your power. What means it? Speak, or I'll strangle you!"

But William Jones was evidently unable to speak, being perfectly paralyzed with fear. Monk stretched forth his hands to seize him again, when the old man, who had been a horrified spectator of all this, suddenly broke in with:

"Look ye, now, I know there was *summat*. It were a leetle book, stuffed in the front of her frock!"

"A book!" returned Monk, eagerly; "and what did you do with it? Tell me that, you old fool! Did you burn it?"

"Burn it?" exclaimed the other. "No, mister, we don't burn nothin', William and me. You know where you put it, William dear. In the old place."

"Then curse you for an avaricious old devil," thundered Monk. "The book has been stolen—do you hear?—stolen by that young painter!"

He could say no more; the effect of his words upon William Jones was electrical. He gave one wild shriek, and began tearing his hair. It now became his turn to moan and rave, and for some time nothing coherent could be got from him.

At length, however, Monk gathered that there was some secret hiding-place which Brinkley had discovered.

"I thought his poking and prying meant summat," moaned William Jones. "I fancied, too, I seen marks i' the sand, but I never could find no one near, and I thought they was my own marks. Oh, what will come to me! I'm ruined!"

"Curse your folly!" exclaimed Monk; "you've brought it all on yourself by your own greed, and you don't deserve I should help you; but I *will* help you! Listen then! It is clear that this young man has possessed himself somehow of your secret and mine. But from what he said to me, I fancy he has not as yet divulged it to a single soul. He

is the only human being we have to fear. We must cease to fear him. Do you understand?"

No, William Jones did not understand; so in order to make his meaning clear, Mr. Monk drew him out from the cottage, and whispered something in his ear. William Jones turned as white as death, and began to tremble all over.

"I couldn't do it, sir," he moaned. "Look ye now—I couldn't do it!"

Monk stamped his foot impatiently; then he turned to his frightened victim.

"Listen to me, William Jones. You ought to know by this time that I have both the power and determination to effect my ends. Continue to oppose me, and play the fool, and all that power shall be used against *you*. Do you hear? I will ruin you! I will hand you over to the authorities as a thief—I will have you tried for concealing the papers which might have proved the identity of the child found washed ashore fifteen years ago! Do you hear?"

Mr. Monk evidently knew the nature of the man with whom he had to deal, for after a little more conversation, William Jones, cowering like a frightened child, promised implicit obedience.

"Now, then," said Monk, when he had brought matters to a satisfactory termination, "you will show me this hiding-place of yours."

To this William Jones at first objected, but Monk was firm.

"Who knows," said he, "but there may be other things having reference to the child. I mean to see for myself. Now, William Jones?"

So William Jones, seeing that resistance would be useless, promised to conduct his friend to the cave; and after a good deal of hesitation and of continued show of unwillingness on William Jones's part, the two men started off.

When they drew near to the cave, William Jones gave a cry, and pointed to the sand. Looking down, Monk clearly saw footprints. They followed them, and found that they led right to the mouth of the cave.

"It's standing open!" cried William Jones, as he pointed down with trembling finger.

"Follow me!" said Monk, crawling down into the hole.

Jones followed in terror.

As he reached the rocks below he heard a sharp cry, and looking down saw, by the dim light of a candle stuck in the wall, Brinkley struggling helplessly in the powerful grip of Monk. He had been sprung upon from behind, and was helpless through a sort of garotte.

Horried and trembling, William Jones was rooted to his place.

Suddenly he saw the young man fall backward lifeless, and, with one last gasp, lie perfectly still. Monk stooped over him, and looked into his face.

"O Mr. Monk!" cried William, "is he—is he—"

"He is dead!" was the reply. "So much the better."

As he spoke, he bent down and searched the young man's pockets. His brow blackened, for he did not find what he sought. Then he took the light from the wall, and held it close to Brinkley's eyes.

Satisfied that he did not breathe, he climbed up the path and rejoined his trembling companion. They passed out of the place, hurriedly replaced the trap-door, and piled on sand and stones.

"There!" said Monk, with a wild smile on his deadly pale face. "He won't trouble either of us again. Come, come!"

And he strode hastily away, followed by William Jones, leaving the young man of the Caravan in the subterranean tomb.

CHAPTER XIII.

WILLIAM JONES IS SERIOUS.

THE two men walked together through the darkness as far as the door of William Jones's hut; then they parted. Mr. Monk struck across the sand-hills toward his own home, while Jones entered the door of his cabin.

He would fain have found that cabin empty, for the memory of the last scene in the cave was still upon him, and made him as nervous as a child. But the old man was there, and wide-awake, and evidently pleased at his son's return.

"Where have you been, William dear?" said he. The question was innocent enough in itself, but it was full of hidden meaning for William Jones.

"Where have I been?" he repeated; "at work, to be sure!"

The tone of his reply startled the old man. He looked up, and saw to his amazement that William was as white as a ghost, and trembling violently.

"What's the matter, William dear?" he asked, eagerly. "Have ye seen a wreck, my son?"

"No, I ain't!" responded his son, violently; "and look ye now, old 'un, you jest be quiet, and let me alone, that's all!"

The old man, knowing his son's temper, did as he was told, and William continued to potter aimlessly about the room. He was certainly trembling very much, and was almost overcome with a nervousness for which he himself could not account. For he was no coward. To get possession of a prize on the high seas he would have faced a storm which might well make brave men tremble, not to mention that he knew that he had on more than one occasion humanely hastened the end of shipwrecked sailors, whom he had found and pillaged on the shore. After these acts he had been able to sleep the sleep of virtue without being haunted by dead men's eyes. But now the case was different. He had not to deal with a victim without friends, a man whose body, described as that of a "shipwrecked mariner," could be buried and forgotten without more ado. In all probability there would this time be a hue and cry, and William Jones trembled lest his share in the ghastly business might ultimately be discovered.

True, he was not actually the culprit, and so, even at the worst, he might escape the gallows; but to a man of his sensitive and affectionate nature the thought of transportation was not pleasant. It was this that made him nervous—this that made him start and tremble at every sound.

Presently a thought struck him.

"Where's Matt?" he asked.

"Don't know, William dear; she ain't been here for hours and hours. May be she's on the shore."

"May be she is—I'll go and have a look," returned William.

It must not be supposed for a moment that William Jones had become afflicted with a sudden and tender interest in Matt—he merely wanted to get quit of the cabin, that was all, and he saw in this a reasonable excuse for walking out alone. He accordingly made his escape, and went wandering off along the shore.

It was ten o'clock when he returned; he was still pale, and drenched to the skin. The old man was dozing beside the fire, and alone.

"Where's Matt?" asked William again.

"Ain't you seen her, William dear? Well, she ain't here."

William Jones did look a little uneasy this time, and it is but due to him to confess that his uneasiness was caused by Matt's prolonged absence. Erratic as she was in her movements, she had not been accustomed to staying out so late, especially on a night when the rain was pouring, and not a glimmer of star or moon was to be seen.

"Wonder what she's a doin' of?" said William;

"suppose I'd best wait up for her. Here, old man, you go to bed, d'ye hear—you ain't wanted anyhow."

The old man accordingly went to bed, and William sat up to await Matt's return. He sat beside the hearth, looked into the smoldering fire, and listened to the rain as it poured down steadily upon the roof. Occasionally he got up, and went to the door; he could see nothing, but he heard the patter of the falling rain, and the low, dreary moan of the troubled sea.

Hour after hour passed, and Matt did not come. William Jones began to doze by the fire—then he sank into a heavy sleep.

He awoke with a start, and found that it was broad daylight. The fire was out, the rain had ceased to fall, and the morning sun was creeping in at the windows. He looked around, and saw that he was still alone. He went into Matt's room—it was empty. She had not returned.

He was now filled with a vague uneasiness. He made up a bit of fire, and was about to issue forth again in search of the truant, when all further trouble was saved him—the door opened, and Matt herself appeared.

She seemed almost as much disturbed as William Jones himself. Her face was very pale, her hair

wild, her dress in great disorder. She started on seeing his; then, assuming rather a devil-may-care look, she lounged in.

"You're up early, William Jones," she said.

"Yes, I am up early," he replied, gruffly; "'cause why?—'cause I ain't been to bed. And where have *you* been?—jest you tell me that."

"Why—I've been out, of course!" returned the girl defiantly.

"That won't do, Matt," returned William Jones. "Come, you'll jest tell me where you've been. You ain't been out all night for nothing."

The girl gave him a look half of defiance, half of curiosity; then she threw herself down, rather than sat, upon a chair.

"I'm tired, I am," she said; "and hungry and cold!"

"Will you tell me where you've been, Matt?" cried William Jones, trembling with suspicious alarm.

"'Course I will, if you keep quiet," said the girl in answer. "There ain't much to tell neither. I were away along to Pencroes when the heavy rain came on; then I lay down behind a haystack and fell asleep, and when I woke up it was daylight, and I come home."

William Jones looked at her steadfastly and long; then, as if satisfied, he turned away. About an

hour later he left the hut and walked along the shore, straining his eyes seaward. But instead of looking steadfastly at one spot, as his custom was, he paused now and again to gaze uneasily about him. At every sound he started and turned pale. In truth, he was becoming a veritable coward—afraid almost of the sound of his own footsteps on the sands.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CARAVAN DISAPPEARS.

SEVERAL days passed away, during which William Jones showed a strange and significant affection for his own fireside. He went out a little in the sunlight; but directly night came he locked and barricaded the door as if against thieves, and declined, on any inducement, to cross the threshold. Even had a three-decker gone ashore in the neighborhood, he would have thought twice before issuing forth into the dreaded darkness.

For William Jones was genuinely afraid; his hereditary calm of mind was shaken, not so much with horror at a murderous deed, as with consternation that his life-long secret had been discovered by

one man, and might, sooner or later, be discovered by others. He did not put implicit faith even in Monk; it was his nature to trust nobody where money was concerned.

As to returning back to the cave until he had quite recovered his equanimity, that was out of the question. Even by daylight he avoided the spot with a holy horror. Only in his dreams, which were dark and troubled, did he visit it—to see the face of the murdered man in the darkness, and the hand of the murdered man pointing at him with cold, decaying finger.

The day after the murder he had been greatly unsettled by a visit from Tim Linney, who demanded news of his master, and said that he had not returned to the Caravan all night. Tim seemed greatly troubled, but gave vent to no very violent ebullitions of grief. When he was gone Matt sat by the fireside, and looked long and keenly at William Jones.

“What are you staring at?” cried he, fidgeting uneasily under her gaze.

“Nowt,” said Matt; “I were only wondering—”

“Then don’t go wondering,” exclaimed the good man rather inconsistently. “*You* mind your own business, and don’t be a fool!”

And he turned testily and gazed at the fire. But

Matt, whose eyes were full of a curious light, was not to be abashed.

"Ain't you well, William Jones?" she asked.

"I'm well enough—I am."

"It's queer, ain't it, that the painter chap never come home?"

"How should I know?" growled William. "May be he's gone back to where he come from."

"Or may be he's drowned? Or may be summat else has happened to him?" suggested Matt.

"Never you mind *him*, my gal. *He's* all right, never fear. And if he ain't, it's no affair o' yours, or mine neither. *You* go along out and play."

Matt went out as directed, and it was some hours before she returned. She found her guardian seated in his old place by the fire, looking at vacancy. He started violently as she entered, and made a clutch at the rude piece of ship's iron which served as a poker.

"Be it you, Matt? Lor', how you startled me! I were—I were—taking a doze."

"I've been up yonder," said Matt.

"Up wheer?"

"Up to the painter chap's cart. He ain't come back; and the man is searchin' for him all up and down the place."

Fortunately it was very dark, so that she could

not see the expression of her hearer's face. She walked to the fireplace, and, taking a box of lucifers from a ledge, began to procure a light, with the view of igniting the rushlight fixed to the table. But in a moment William blew out the match, and snatched the box from her.

"What are you doin' of?" he cried. "Wasting the matches, as if they cost nowt. You'll come to the workus, afore you're done."

The days passed, and there was no news of the absent man. Every day Matt went up to the Caravan to make inquiries. At last, one afternoon, she returned, looking greatly troubled; her eyes were red, too, as if she had been crying.

"What's the matter now?" demanded William, who had left his usual seat and was standing at the door.

"Nowt," said Matt, wiping her eyelids with the back of her hand.

"Don't you tell no lies. You've heerd summat? Stop! What's that theer under your arm?"

All at once he had perceived that she carried a large roll of something wrapped in brown paper. He took it from her, and opened it nervously. It was the crayon portrait of herself executed by the defunct artist.

"Who gave you this here?" cried William Jones, trembling more than ever.

"Tim."

"Who's *he*?"

"Him as come looking arter his master. The painter chap ain't found; and now Tim's goin' away in the cart to tell his friends. And he give me this — my pictur'; he give me it to keep. His master said I were to have it; and I mean to keep it now he's dead!"

William Jones handed back the picture, and seemed relieved, indeed, when it was out of his hands.

"Dead?" he muttered, not meeting Matt's eyes, but looking right out to sea. "Who told you he were dead?"

Matt did not reply, but gazed at William so long and so significantly that the good man, conscious of her scrutiny, turned and plunged into the darkness of his dwelling.

An hour later a loud voice summoned him forth. He went to the door, and there was Monk, of Monks-hurst. It was the first time they had met since they parted on the night of the murder. Monk was dressed in a dark summer suit, and looked unusually spick and span.

"Where's the girl?" he cried, after a whispered colloquy of some minutes. "Matt, where are you?"

In answer to the call Matt appeared at the door.

No sooner did she perceive Monk than she trembled violently, and went very pale.

"Come here, Matt," he said, with an insinuating smile. "See! I've brought something for you—something pretty for you to wear."

As he spoke he drew from his waistcoat pocket a small gold ring, set with turquoise stones. But Matt still trembled, and shrank away.

"I don't want it!—I shan't wear it," she cried.

"Nonsense, Matt!" said Monk. "Why, it's a ring fit for a lady. Come, let me put it on your finger."

So great seemed her agitation, so deep her dread of him, that she could not stir; so that when he approached, laughing, and caught her round the waist, he slipped the ring on her finger before she could resist. But it only remained there a moment. With a quick, sharp cry, she tore herself free, and, taking the ring off, threw it right away from her upon the sand. Then, with a wild gesture of fear and loathing, she rushed into the cottage.

William Jones walked over and picked up the ring, while Monk stood scowling darkly after the fugitive.

"What the devil ails the girl?" cried the latter, with a fierce oath, pocketing the present.

"I dunno. She's never been the same since—since the painter chap went missing. I'm afeerd he turned the gal's head."

"He'll turn no more heads," muttered Monk under his breath; he added aloud and with decision, "There must be an end to this. She must be married to me at once."

"Do you mean it, master? When you spoke on it first I thought you was joking."

"Then you were a fool for your pains. She's old enough, and bold enough, and vixenish enough; but I'll tame her. I tell you there must be no more delay. My mind's made up, and I'll wait no longer."

Sinking their voices they continued to talk together for some time. Now Matt was crouching close to the threshold, and had heard every word of the above conversation, and much that followed it. When Monk walked away and disappeared, leaving William Jones ruminant at the broken gate, she suddenly reappeared.

Curiously enough all her excitement had departed. Instead of weeping or protesting, she looked at William Jones—and laughed.

Monk had left his horse at the coast-guard station. Remounting, he rode rapidly away through the sand-hills in the direction of the lake. As he approached the spot of the old encampment, he saw that the Caravan had gone.

He rode on thoughtfully till he gained the highway, when he put his horse into a rapid trot. Just

before he gained the gate and avenue near to which he had first encountered Brinkley, he saw the Caravan before him on the dusty road.

He hesitated for a moment; then hurried rapidly forward, and, arriving close to the vehicle, saw the Irishman's head looking round at him from the driver's seat. He beckoned, and Tim pulled up.

"Has your master returned? I am informed that he has been missing for some days."

Tim shook his head very dolefully.

"No, sor; sorra sight have I seen of him for three days and three nights. I'm going back wid the baste and the house, to tell his friends the bad news. May be it's making fun of me he is, and I'll find him somewheres on the road."

"I hope you will," said Monk, sympathetically. "I think—hum—it is quite possible he has, as you suggest, wandered homeward. Good-day to you."

So saying, Monk turned off by the gate which they had just reached, and rode away up the avenue.

Tim looked after him till he disappeared. Then the same curious change came over him which had come over Matt after she had been listening to the colloquy between Monk and William Jones.

He laughed!

CHAPTER XV.

A BRIDAL PARTY AND A LITTLE SURPRISE.

A WEEK passed away. The shadow of the Caravan no longer fell on the green meadow by the lake, and the struggling population of Aberglyn, unsuspecting of foul play, had already forgotten both the Caravan and the owner.

And if facts were to be taken into consideration in estimating the extent of her memory, Matt too had forgotten. It was common talk now, that she, the grammarless castaway, the neglected *protégée* of William Jones, was to be married to the master of the great house! Nay, the very day was fixed; and that very day was only two sunrises distant; and Monk, of Monkshurst, had in his pocket a special license, which he had procured, at an expenditure of five pounds, from London.

Doubtless, in any other more populous locality the affair would have occasioned no little scandal, and many ominous shakings of the head; but the inhabitants were few and far between, and had little or no time for idle gossiping. The coast-guardsmen and their wives were the only individuals who exhibited any interest, and even their excitement was faint and

evanescent, like the movements of a fish in a shallow and unwholesome pool.

But the really extraordinary part of the whole affair was the conduct of Matt herself. Apparently quite cured of her former repugnance to a union with Monk, she made no objection whatever to the performance of the ceremony, and laughed merrily when she was informed that the day was fixed. Monk, in his grim, taciturn way, was jubilant. He came to and fro constantly, and assumed the manners of a lover. Had he been less bent on one particular object two things might have struck him as curious:—(1) That Matt, though she had consented to marry him, steadfastly refused to wear his ring, or accept any other presents; and (2) that she still shrunk, with persistent and ill-disguised dislike, from his caresses.

It was now late in the month of August, and the weather was broken by troublous winds and a fretful moon. For several weeks William Jones, in his mortal terror, had refrained from visiting the cave; he had never set his foot therein, indeed, since the night of the assassination. At last he could bear the suspense no longer. Suppose some one else had discovered his treasure, and robbed him? Suppose some subterranean change had obliterated the landmarks or submerged the cavern! Suppose a thousand dreadful

things! Tired of miserable supposition, William determined, despite his terror, to make sure.

So late one windy and rainy night he stole forth with his unlit lantern, and fought his way in the teeth of half a gale to the familiar place, which he found, however, with some little difficulty. He was neither superstitious nor imaginative, but throughout the journey he was prey to nameless terrors. Every gust of wind went through his heart like a knife; every sound of wind or sea made that same heart stop and listen. Only supreme greed and miserly anxiety led him on. But at last he gained the cave, within which there was a sound as of clashing legions, clarions shrieking, drums beating, all the storm and stress of the awful waters clashing on the cliffs without, and boiling with unusual screams through the black slit between the cave and the Devil's Caldron.

Trembling, with perspiration standing in great beads on his face, he searched the cave for the corpse of the murdered man, expecting to find it well advanced in decomposition. Strange to say, however, it had disappeared.

William Jones was at once relieved and alarmed: relieved because he was spared a horrible experience; alarmed because he could not account for the disappearance. A little reflection, however, suggested that

one of those tidal waves so common on the coast might have risen well up into the cavern, washed away the body from its place on the shingle, and carried it away in the direction of the Caldron. "In which case," he reflected, "them coast-guard chaps would find it some day among the rocks or on the shore, and think it had been drowned in the way of natur'."

Satisfied that everything else was undisturbed, he retired as hastily as possible, sealed up the entrance to the cavern, and ran hastily home.

The morning of the marriage came—a fine sunny morning. An open dog-cart belonging to Monk, and driven by one of his servants, stood at William Jones's door, and close to it a light country cart, borrowed by William Jones himself from a neighboring farmer. The population, consisting of an aged coast-guard, two coast-guard's wives, and half a dozen dejected children, crowded in front of the cottage.

The bridegroom, attired in decent black, with a flower in his button-hole, stood waiting impatiently in the garden. Despite the festive occasion, he had a gloomy and hang-dog appearance. Presently there emerged from the door William Jones, attired in a drowned seaman's suit several sizes too large for him, and wearing a chimney-pot hat and a white rosette.

Leaning on his arm was Matt, dressed in a dress of blue silk, newly made for her, out of damaged materials supplied by Jones, by one of the coast-guard women, a light straw hat with blue ribbons to match, and a light lace shawl. Behind this pair hobbled William Jones's father, whose costume was nautical like his son's but more damaged, and who also sported a chimney-pot hat and a white rosette.

The crowd gave a feeble cheer. Matt looked round and smiled; but mingled with her smile there was a kind of vague anxiety and expectation.

It was arranged that Monk should drive Matt in the dog-cart, while William Jones and his father followed in the commoner vehicle. At Pencroes, where the ceremony was to be performed, they were to meet with one Mr. Penarvon, a country squire and kindred spirit of Monk's, who had promised to be "best man."

Monk took the reins, while Matt got in and seated herself beside him, the groom getting up behind; and away they went along the sand-choked road, followed by Jones and his father.

The day was bright and merry, but Matt never thought of the old proverb, "Merry is the bride that the sun shines on"; she was too busy examining the prospect on every side of her. All at once, as the bridal procession wound round the edge

of the lonely lake, she uttered a cry of delight. There, standing in its old place by the lake-side, was the Caravan.

Monk looked pale—there was something ghostly in the re-appearance even of this inanimate object. He was a man of strong nerve, however, and he speedily smiled at his own fears.

As they approached the spot they saw Tim standing near the vehicle in conversation with two strange gentlemen—one a little man in black broadcloth, the other a tall, broad-shouldered fellow wearing a light overcoat and a wideawake hat. Directly the procession approached, this group separated, and its three members walked severally to the road, he with the wideawake hat standing right in the center of the road quietly smoking a cigar.

As the dog-cart came up he held up his hand. Unable to proceed without running him down, Monk pulled up angrily.

"What is it? Why do you block the road?" he cried, fiercely.

"Excuse me, governor," returned the other, coolly.

"Mr. Monk, of Monkshurst, I believe?"

"That's my name."

"Sorry to trouble you on such a day, but I should like a few words with you."

"I can not stay—I am going to be married!"

"So I heard," said the man, lifting his hat and bowing with a grin to Matt. "Glad to see you, Miss. How do you do?—But the fact is, Mr. Monk, my business won't keep. Be good enough to step this way."

Full of some unaccountable foreboding, inspired partly by the stranger's suave, yet determined, manner, partly by the re-appearance of the Caravan, Monk alighted, and followed the other across the grass to the close vicinity of the house on wheels. The little elderly man followed, and the man who had first spoken went through the ceremony of introduction.

"This is Mr. Monk, sir. Mr. Monk, this gentleman is Mr. Lightwood, of the firm of Lightwood & Lightwood, solicitors, Chester."

"And you—who the devil are *you*?" demanded Monk, with his old savagery.

"My name is Marshall, Christian name, John, though my friends call me Jack," answered the other, with airy impudence. "John Marshall, governor, of the detective force."

Monk now went pale indeed. But recovering himself, he cried, "I know neither of you. I warned you that I was in haste. What do you want? Out with it!"

The little man now took up the conversation,

speaking in a prim, business-like voice, and occasionally referring to a large note-book which he carried.

"Mr. Monk, you are, I am informed, the sole heir male of the late Colonel Monk, your cousin by the father's side, who was supposed to have died in India in the year 1862."

"Yes, that's true. What then?"

"On the report of his death, his name being included in an official list of officers killed and wounded in action, and it being understood that he died without lawful issue, you laid claim to the demesne of Monkshurst, in Cheshire, and that of the same name in Anglesea. Your claim was recognized, and in 1865 you took possession."

"Well. Have you detained me to hear only what I already knew?"

"Pardon me, I have not finished. I have now to inform you that you inherited under a misconception—first, because Colonel Monk was married and had issue; secondly, because he did not die in India, but reached the shores of England, where he perished in the shipwreck of the vessel *Trinidad* on Christmas-day, 1864."

Monk was livid. At this moment Jones, who had been watching the scene from a distance, came over, panting and perspiring in ill-concealed terror.

"Lor', Mr. Monk, what's the matter? Look ye now, we shall be late for the wedding."

As he spoke, Marshall, the detective, clapped him playfully on the shoulder.

"How d'ye do, William Jones? I've often heard of you, and wished to know you. Pray stop where you are. I'll talk to *you* presently."

"I don't know what you mean," Monk now said, with dogged desperation, "with all this rigmarole, Mr. Lightwood, or whatever your name is. It seems to me you are simply raving. If I am not my cousin's heir, who is, tell me that?"

"His daughter," said the man, quietly.

"He never married, and *he* never had a daughter."

"His daughter, an infant twelve or fourteen months old, sailed to England with him, was shipwrecked with him, but saved by a special Providence, and has since been living in this place under the name of Matt Jones."

"Your intended bride, you know," added Marshall, with an insinuating smile. "Hullo, where *is* the young lady?"

Monk looked round toward the dog-cart and on every side, but Matt was nowhere to be seen.

"I see her go into that their cart," said William Jones.

"Call her," cried Monk. "I'll stay no longer here. Listen to me, you two. Whether you are telling truth or lies, that girl is going to become my wife—I have her guardian's consent, and she herself, I may tell you, fully appreciates the honor I am doing her."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Lightwood, smiling. "Unfortunately I, as Miss Monk's legal adviser, must have a say in the matter. Doubtless this marriage would be a very pretty arrangement for keeping the late Colonel Monk's fortune and property in your possession, but I can not conscientiously approve of the young lady's marriage to an *assassin*."

"An assassin?—what—what do you mean?" gasped Monk, staggering as if from a blow.

"Tell him, Mr. Marshall."

"All right, sir. Well, you see, Mr. Monk, of Monkshurst," continued the detective, grimly, yet playfully, "you're accused of making away with—murdering, in fact—a young gentleman who came to Aberglyn a few weeks ago in that little house on wheels; and this nice friend of yours" (here he again slapped William Jones on the shoulder) "is accused of being your accomplice."

"No, no. I never done it! I'm innocent, I am!" cried William Jones. "Tell 'em, Mr. Monk, tell 'em—I'd nowt to do with it."

"Silence, you fool," said the other; then he added, turning on his accusers, "You are a couple of madmen, I think! I know nothing of the young man you speak of! I have heard that he is missing, that is all; but there is no evidence that any harm has come to him, for his body has not been found."

Here Marshall turned with a wink to William Jones, and nudged him in the ribs.

"Don't you think now," he asked, "it might be worth while looking for it in *that little underground parlor* of yours, down alongside the sea?"

William Jones uttered a despairing groan, and fell on his knees.

"I'm ruined!" he cried. "O Mr. Monk, it's your doing! Lord help me! They knows everything."

"Curse you, hold your tongue!" said Monk, with a look of mad contempt and hatred. "These men are only playing upon your fears, but they can not frighten *me*."

"No?" remarked the detective, lighting his cigar, which had gone out. "I think we shall even manage *that* in time."

As he spoke he carelessly, and as if inadvertently, drew out a pair of steel handcuffs, which he looked at reflectively, threw up and caught underhand in the air.

"You accuse me of assassination?" said Monk, trembling violently. "I warn you to beware, for I will not suffer such accusations without seeking redress. If you have any proof of the truth of your preposterous charge, produce it."

At this moment Matt, looking bright as sunshine, leaped out of the Caravan.

"There's my proof," said Marshall. "Miss Monk, this amiable bridegroom of yours denies being concerned in harming Mr. Charles Brinkley. Is he telling the truth?"

Matt's face darkened, and she looked at Monk with eyes of cordial detestation.

"No," she said, "he's lying."

"Matt," cried Monk, fiercely, "take care!"

"He's lying," she repeated, not heeding him. "I see him do it with my own two eyes, and I see William Jones helping him and looking on; they thought that no one was nigh, but *I* was. I was hiding behind them sacks and barrels in the cave."

.

Monk now felt that the game was almost up, for he was beset on every side, and the very ground seemed opening under his feet. The wretched Jones, in a state bordering on frenzy, remained on his knees wailing over his own ruin. The two strangers, Lightwood and Marshall, looked on as calm but inter-

ested spectators. Matt, having delivered her home-thrust of accusation, stood and gazed into Monk's face with cool defiance.

"It is a plot!" Monk cried, presently; "an infamous plot to ruin me! You have been tampering, I see, with this wild girl, whom you foolishly suppose kin to me by blood. Arrest me, if you please—I shall not take the trouble to resist, for I am perfectly innocent in this matter."

He added, while they looked at one another as if somewhat puzzled:

"As to the girl's relationship with my dead cousin, the very idea is absurd. Where are the proofs of her birthright?"

"Here," said a quiet voice.

Monk turned his eyes, and started back in wonder, while William Jones shrieked and fell forward on his face. Standing before them in the sunshine was the reality or the semblance of—the murdered young man of the Caravan!

CHAPTER XVI.

THE "MURDERED" MAN!

Yes, it was the artist himself, looking a little pale, and carrying one arm in a sling, but, otherwise, to all appearance, in good health.

Monk had strong nerves, but he could not prevent himself from uttering a wild cry of horror and wonder. At the same moment, Matt went to the young man's side, and with an air of indescribable trust and sweetness, took his hand—the hand which was free—and put it to her lips.

"The proof is here," he said, calmly, "here upon my person. I am not quite dead, you see, Mr. Monk, of Monkshurst, and I thought I should like to bring it you myself. It consists, as you are aware, of Colonel Monk's dying message, written on the fly-leaf of his prayer-book, and of the marriage certificate of his wife; both these having been placed upon his child's person, concealed by the unsuspecting and illiterate Jones, and found by me after a lapse of many years.

Monk did not speak; his tongue was frozen. He stood aghast, opening and shutting his clinched hands spasmodically, and shaking like a leaf. Reassured to some extent by the sound of the voice, unmistakably appertaining to a person of flesh and blood, William

Jones gradually uplifted his face, and looked in ghastly wonder at the speaker.

"You will be anxious to ascertain," proceeded Brinkley, with his old air of lightness, "by what accident, or special Providence, I arose from the grave in which you politely entombed me? The explanation is very simple. My young friend here, Matt, the foundling, or, as I should rather call her, Miss Monk, of Monkshurst, came to my assistance, attended to my injuries, which were not so serious as you imagined, and enabled me, before daybreak, to gain the kindly shelter of my Caravan. Tim and a certain rural doctor did the rest. I am sorry to disappoint you, Mr. Monk, but I felt bound to keep my promise—to interfere seriously with your little arrangements, if you persistently refused to do justice to this young lady."

As he spoke, Monk uttered a savage oath and rushed toward the road; but Marshall was after him in a moment, and sprang upon him. There was a quick struggle. Suddenly Monk drew a knife, opened it, and brandished it in the air; so that it would have gone ill with his assailant if the herculean Tim, coming to the rescue, had not pinioned him from behind. In another moment the knife was lying on the grass, and Monk was neatly handcuffed by the detective.

"Now, governor, you'd better take it quietly!"

said Marshall, while Monk struggled, and gnashed his teeth in impotent rage. "You're a smart one, you are, but the game's up at last."

Monk recovered himself, and laughed fiercely.

"Let me go! Of what do you accuse me? It was murder just now, but since the murdered person is alive (d—n him!) I should like to know on what charge you arrest me."

"Oh, there's no difficulty about that!" said Brinkley, looking at him superciliously. "In the first place, you have by fraud and perjury possessed yourself of what never legally belonged to you. In the second place, you *attempted* murder, at any rate. But upon my life, I don't think you are worth prosecuting. I think, Mr. Marshall, you might let him go."

"It's letting a mad dog loose, sir," replied Marshall. "He'll hurt somebody."

"What do *you* say, Miss Monk?" said Brinkley. "This amiable-looking person is your father's cousin. Shall I release your bridegroom in order that you may go with him to the altar of Hymen and complete the ceremony?"

"I hate him!" cried Matt; "I should like to drown him in the sea."

Brinkley laughed.

"Your sentiments are natural, but unchristian. And the gentle Jones, now, who is looking at you so

affectionately, what would you do with *him*? Drown him in the sea too?"

"No, no, Matt," interposed William Jones, abjectly; "speak up for me, Matt. I ha' been father to you all these years."

Matt seemed perplexed what to say. So Brinkley again took up the conversation.

"On reflection we will refer William Jones to his friends the 'coast-guard chaps.' I think he will be punished enough by the distribution of his little property in the cave. Eh, Mr. Jones?"

Jones only wrung his hands and wailed, thinking of his precious treasure.

"And so, Matt," continued Brinkley, "there will be no wedding after all. I'm afraid you're awfully disappointed?"

Matt replied by taking his hand again, lifting it to her lips, and kissing it fondly. The young man turned his head away, for his eyes had suddenly grown full of grateful tears.

CONCLUSION.

My tale is told. The adventure of the Caravan has ended. Little more remains to be said.

Monk, of Monkshurst, was not brought to trial for his iniquities, but he was sorely enough punished by the loss of his ill-gotten estates. Before the claim of

the foundling was fully proved he left England, never to return. Whether he is alive or dead I can not tell.

William Jones, too, escaped legal punishment. A severer retribution came upon him in the seizure and dispersal of the hoards in the great cave. So sorely did he take his loss to heart that he crept to his bed and had an attack of brain fever. When he reappeared on the scene of his old plunderings his intellect was weakened, and he showed curious evidences of imbecility. But the ruling passion remained strong within him. I saw him only last summer, rambling on the sea-shore, talking incoherently to himself, and watching the sea in search of wreckage as of old.

And Matt?

Well, her title to Monkshurst and the property was fully proved. For a long time she did not realize her good fortune, but gradually the pleasant truth dawned upon her in a sunrise of nice dresses, jewelry, and plenty of money. Chancery stepped in like a severe foster-parent, and sent her to school. There she remained for several years; but Charles Brinkley, who had first taken in hand the vindication of her claims, and who never ceased to be interested in her, saw her from time to time, and took particular note of her improvement in her grammar and the gentle art of speech.

"Matt," he said, when they met last Christmas in London, and when he saw before him, instead of a towsy girl, as bright and buxom a young lady as ever wore purple raiment and fine linen, "Matt, you are 'growed up' at last!"

Matt blushed and hung her head, with a touch of her old manner.

"Yes, I am grown up, as you say. I wonder what William Jones would think if he saw me now."

"And if he noticed those pretty boots, Matt, and heard you play the piano and prattle a little in French. Upon my word, it's a transformation! You always were a nice girl, though."

"Do you really think so?" asked Matt shyly. "Did you *always* think so?"

"Certainly."

"Even when I told you I liked you so much, and you told me 'it wouldn't do!'"

It was Brinkley's turn to blush now. It was clear that Matt, despite other changes, still retained her indomitable frankness.

"Even then," he replied, laughing. "But I say you were a precocious youngster. You *proposed* to me, you know!"

"I know I did," said Matt, "and it wasn't leap-year then."

She added still more slyly:

"But it's leap-year *now*!"

Their eyes met. Both blushed more and more.

"Matt, don't! It won't do, you know! Yes, I say so still. You're a rich woman, and I'm only a poor devil of a painter. You must marry some great swell."

But Matt replied:

"I shall never marry any one but *you*!"

"You won't? Do you mean it?"

"Of course I do."

He caught her in his arms.

"My darling Matt—yes, I shall call you by that dear name to the end of the chapter. You love me then? I can't believe it!"

"I have loved you," she answered, laughing, "ever since I first came—'to be took!'"

And she rested her head on his shoulder, just as she had done in the old days, when she was an unsophisticated child of Nature.

"So there's to be a wedding after all," he said, kissing her. "Matt, I've an idea!"

"Yes?"

"When we marry, suppose we arrange to spend the honeymoon in—a CARAVAN!"

THE END.

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